Scientific Network on Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare Minutes of the 10th meeting

Held on 14-15 June 2016, Parma

(Agreed on 03 August 2016)

Participants

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

Country	Name (14 June)	Name (15 June)
Austria	Friedrich Schmoll	Friedrich Schmoll
Belgium	Tsang Tsey Chow	Kristine Ceulemans
Cyprus	Christodoulos Pipis	Christodoulos Pipis
Croatia	Tomislav Mikus	Drazen Knezevic
Czech Republic	Eva Rencova	Eva Rencova
Denmark	Francisco Fernando Calvo Artavia	Francisco Fernando Calvo Artavia
Estonia	Anne-Ly Veetamm	
Finland	Taina Mikkonen	Jonna Kyyro
France		Charlotte Dunoyer
Germany	Michael Marahrens	Michael Marahrens
Hungary	Anna Oszoli	Anna Luca Vecsei
Ireland	John O'Gorman	John O'Gorman
Italy		Fabrizio De Massis
Latvia	Edvins Olsevskis	Edvins Olsevskis
Luxembourg	Carlo Georges	Carlo Georges
Netherlands	Olaf Stenvers	Olaf Stenvers
Poland	Przemyslaw Cwynar	Przemyslaw Cwynar
Portugal	Maria Oliveira	Maria Oliveira
Slovakia	Anna Ondrejkova	Anna Ondrejkova
Spain	Teresa Villalba Rodriguez	Beatriz Gonzalo Martinez
Sweden		Cecilia Hulten
United Kingdom	Rebeca Garcia	Helen Roberts
Switzerland	Beat Wechsler	Dominique Suter

- **Network Representatives of Pre-Accession Countries:**

Albania	Kujtim Mersini	Kujtim Mersini
Bosnia and Eregovina	Dzemil Hajric	Dzemil Hajric
FYR of Macedonia	Blagojco Tabakovski	Blagojco Tabakovski
Turkey	Yasin Şen	Yasin Şen

- **EFSA:**

ALPHA Unit: Francesca Baldinelli (Scientific Officer), Alessandro Broglia (Scientific Officer), Denise Candiani (Scientific Officer), Edoardo Carnesecchi (Interim), Sofie Dhollander (Scientific Officer), Andrea Gervelmeyer (AHAW Team Leader - chair), Andrey Gogin (Scientific Officer), Eliana Lima (Trainee), Giuseppe Stancanelli (Head of ALPHA Unit *ad interim*), Frank Verdonck (Scientific Officer), Gabriele Zancanaro (Scientific Officer).

- **Expert:**

Francesca Porta, former EFSA trainee

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

Apologies were received from Greece, Iceland, Kosovo, Malta, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 9th meeting of the Scientific Network on Risk Assessment on Animal Health and Welfare held on 10-11 November 2015, Parma

The minutes were agreed by written procedure on 21 December 2015 and published on the EFSA website on 21 December 2015.

4. Topics for discussion

4.1. Slaughter of pregnant animals

EFSA presented the current mandate for a scientific opinion on the slaughter of pregnant animals and described the approach the AHAW Panel takes to assess the various ToR.

Germany presented a study carried out in Germany which aims at establishing the prevalence of pregnant animals being slaughtered, including the gestational age at slaughter, and the reasons for this phenomenon. In this study, diagnosis of pregnancy and estimation of the age of the fetus is included.

The Netherlands reported that during the culling operations carried out in the context of the Q-fever outbreak, goats were injected with barbiturates, followed by T61 injection, leading to suffocation of the fetus.

The UK reported that a study on the slaughter of pregnant animals exists.

Switzerland reported a 2014 slaughterhouse survey in which data on this phenomenon has been collected.

4.2. Space allowances at slaughterhouses

The UK presented a report of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) establishing guidance for lairage space allowances for different species at slaughterhouse lairages. The report assesses the existing voluntary standards and scientific research and is available at this link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fawc-advice-on-space-allowances-in-slaughterhouse-lairages.

It was noted that guides for good practice usually do not cover lairage space allowances, while some quality assurance schemes do.

Germany reported that the German handbook for animal welfare at slaughter intended for law enforcement bodies lists requirements regarding resting behaviour and conductive thermoregulation (e.g. lateral lying must be possible). It requires that at every lairage pen a sign showing the maximum allowable number of animals is displayed and provides a checklist for the official veterinarians. It also foresees that animal behaviour in lairage pens be observed by the official veterinarians. In addition, several projects on the effect of lairage time on behaviour and stunning effectiveness, studying stress levels, have been carried out.

4.3. Low Atmospheric Pressure Stunning assessment

EFSA presented the new mandate requesting the assessment of 5 new scientific studies on the Low Atmospheric Pressure Stunning (LAPS) method. The outcome of a previous assessment of evidence submitted on the method was provided. The studies will be assessed using the approach and criteria established in the EFSA Guidance on the assessment criteria for studies evaluating the effectiveness of stunning interventions regarding animal protection at the time of killing (https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3486). A brief overview of the LAPS method was given.

4.4. Risk factors in slaughterhouses related to animal protection

A brief discussion of risk factors that Network members have identified regarding animal protection in slaughterhouses took place. An analysis of such risks has been done for the red meat production chain in The Netherlands. The results of the analysis show that for CO_2 stunning in general there is a lack of knowledge of the situation while the animals are in the pits. Another risk factor is the restraining of pigs before being electrically stunned and the shackling of poultry. It was also found that achieving an effective cut compatible with welfare

requirements during ritual slaughter of heavy animals is physically too demanding for slaughterhouse staff.

4.5. Feedback from the meeting of National Contact Points under Art 20 Council Regulation (EC)1099/2009

EFSA provided the Network members with feedback from the meeting of National Contact Points (NCP) established under Art 20 of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009, which took place in Parma on 26-27 May 2016. At the NCP meeting it had been concluded that sharing already existing resources, such as guides to good practice, opinions, training material, and information between NCP would be very useful. This could be done using an improved Member States Animal Welfare Network (MSAWN) on the EU Communication and Information Resource Centre for Administrations platform (CIRCABC), or Microsoft Office 365. NCP agreed that they would meet for one general meeting per year; in addition, meetings on specific issues should be organised if and when needed, drawing in different participants (e.g. competent authorities (CA), scientists). A link to the NCP contact list and email addresses will be provided on the EFSA webpage on animal welfare at slaughter, email and other means should be used by NCP to consult other NCP on scientific questions whenever needed.

AHAW Network meeting participants underlined that it would be best to use existing platforms for document and information exchange between NCP, instead of establishing another repository, however, the lack of user-friendliness of the current MSAWN-system was acknowledged. It was emphasised that good networking should take place between the AHAW Network members and the NCP within a given country to achieve best synergies and avoid duplications.

4.6. Depopulation in the context of disease control operations

Francesca Porta, a former trainee in the EFSA Animal Health and Welfare Team, presented her the results of her training project, which aimed at establishing facts about depopulations carried out in the context of disease control operations in the EU MSs with view to animal welfare. She provided an overview of the number of control disease operations carried out in the EU MSs from 2010 to 2015, the different methods used for stunning the animals and the problems encountered in carrying out the operation.

It was stated that this constitutes a helpful overview of the methods used and problems encountered, that could be used for a lessons-learnt exercise based on the reports submitted to EC. It was further suggested that EFSA could propose a modification of the reporting formats to enable analysis of their data also for other purposes.

4.7. The use of expert-knowledge elicitation in animal welfare risk assessments

EFSA presented the expert-knowledge elicitation (EKE) methodology. EKE is a useful source of estimates in the absence of scientific data/evidence generated by scientific studies. The different approaches to EKE, that are outlined in the EFSA guidance (https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3734) were

explained. Examples of EFSA risk assessments (RA) in the area of animal welfare, in which EKE had been used, were presented. AHAW Network members were encouraged to contact AHAW staff if further information and advice on using EKE in welfare RA are needed.

4.8. Impact of infectious diseases on animal welfare

EFSA presented the ongoing work related to the listing and categorisation of infectious animal diseases in the context of the new EU Animal Health Law (AHL), with a special emphasis on the assessment of the impact of infectious diseases on animal welfare. An overview of existing methodologies on disease impact assessment that has been established by EFSA through searches of the web and of peer reviewed literature was provided. The different frameworks, aggregating methods, topics and criteria used by the different methods identified were presented.

4.9. Abnormal behaviour observed in early weaned surplus piglets

Switzerland presented two recent studies that have been carried out in Switzerland to assess welfare aspects related to the increase in number of live born piglets that often outnumbers the number of functional teats, and the resulting early weaning practices using artificial rearing systems (rescue decks and nurseries). The studies showed that the welfare of piglets removed from the sow at the age of 3-6 days and raised in the tested rescue deck and nursery is impaired, as shown by artificially raised piglets showing high and increasing levels of belly nosing, less play-fighting and less resting behaviour than piglets reared by the sow in a loose farrowing pen. The occurrence of belly nosing is attributed to the early separation from the sow, with piglets redirecting massaging behaviour to their pen mates, while the observed differences in play-fighting and reduced resting behaviour could be caused by the small space allowance per piglet provided in the tested artificial rearing systems. The studies concluded that the breeding goals regarding litter size should be adjusted to the number of functional teats.

The Netherlands reiterated that the objective is to reduce litter sizes so that it is no necessary to resort to artificial rearing systems.

4.10. Lumpy skin disease

EFSA provided an overview of the current situation in Europe with view to the on-going Lumpy skin disease (LSD) outbreaks. The current knowledge and remaining scientific questions regarding epidemiology, diagnosis and vaccination were summarised. A brief outlook on the current mandate for urgent advice regarding the effect of a combined stamping out and vaccination strategy was presented.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia provided details about the LSD outbreaks in its territory, the first of which was confirmed on 21 April 2016. Information about the control measures and the vaccination strategy being implemented were presented. It was stated that at the time of the declaring a

suspicion of LSD in a herd, usually 1-2 animals in the concerned herd displayed clinical signs compatible with LSD.

France informed the meeting that ANSES is working on an assessment of the risk of LSD introduction into France and concerning an LSD antigen bank (related to eventually producing an LSD vaccine) that will be delivered in November 2016.

4.11. Avian influenza

EFSA gave an overview of its recent mandates regarding Avian Influenza and explained the approaches that are taken to answer the respective Terms of Reference. It was highlighted that the French authorities are kindly sharing French outbreak data with EFSA for use in its assessment, while maintaining the possibility for French scientists us it in their scientific publications. The outcomes of the assessment will be presented to the AHAW Network, as a model for similar collaborations with MS on AI and other diseases, for which data from outbreak investigations is needed to inform scientific risk assessments.

Italy presented the H7N7 HPAI outbreak that took place in an organic free-range laying hen holding and in an industrial fattening turkey holding in Ferrara province in Emilia Romagna at the end of April and in May 2016. The results of the epidemiological investigations and the control measures taken were explained in detail. It was noted that the epidemiological involvement of horses in these outbreaks has not been assessed.

The meeting was informed that Belgium recently did a scientific evaluation regarding the introduction of HPAI into Belgium.

4.12. Bluetongue Disease

EFSA presented the on-going work on the new mandate on bluetongue (BT). A detailed explanation of the background of the mandate, the ToR and the approach for the different scientific questions was provided. It was highlighted that data from MS would be needed for the assessment, particularly from Italy, France and Spain.

Spain provided a detailed presentation on the Spanish experience with the different BT serotypes throughout the years. The costs and benefits of vaccinating against BT as well as the benefits of identifying seasonally BT-free zones were highlighted.

4.13. Disease Listing and Categorisation under the new Animal Health Law (AHL)

EFSA gave a presentation of the work on-going under the mandate on disease listing and categorising. A detailed description of the approach taken by the AHAW Panel to translate the criteria for listing and categorisation of infectious animal diseases given in the new Animal Health Law (AHL) into scientific questions and parameters on which data is collected, was provided. In response to the question how the EFSA assessment will account for differences in MS with respect to the different diseases, it was clarified that the EFSA assessment will

provide for each disease i) a full characterisation of the disease regarding the criteria in the AHL, ii) a statement if the criteria for listing are fulfilled, iii) a statement if the criteria for the different categories are fulfilled. This way, the EFSA assessment will assist the risk managers in deciding if a given disease should be listed, and, if so, how it should be categorised. In that process, regional differences, which will be highlighted in the disease characterisation, can be taken into consideration by the risk managers.

4.14. Update on current activities with regard to African Swine Fever (ASF)

EFSA gave an update on the African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreaks and presented the current mandate on scientific and technical advice on ASF. The on-going collaboration with affected EU MS on harmonising data collection and data analyses was explained.

Poland provided a brief overview of the recent samples collected which were tested for ASF without finding any positive results.

4.15. Assessment of the effect of Newcastle Disease (ND) vaccination on numbers of clinical suspicions of ND, general health of the poultry population and other factors

Sweden presented the structure of the Swedish poultry production sector and its recent history of Newcastle disease (ND). In the last 20 years only sporadic outbreaks of ND occurred every second or every third year, affecting exclusively layers since 1997. After the last ND outbreak in 3 holdings in summer 2014, broiler producers started to request that ND vaccination be introduced. In order to assist the Swedish Board of Agriculture in its decision process, Sweden would like to receive information from other MS regarding experiences from vaccinating MS. It was agreed to circulate a questionnaire to the AHAW Network members and to inform the Network at its next meeting on the responses received.

4.16. Requests for information from other AHAW Network members and EFSA

4.16.1. Target avian wild species for early detection of West Nile virus circulation?

Spain provided a presentation on the West Nile Fever (WNF) situation in their country. Between 2010 and 2015, 105 WNF outbreaks were detected, in which 120 horses were affected of which 17 died or had to be killed for animal welfare reasons. It was highlighted that current surveillance in wild birds does not seem to be accurate enough as detection usually occurs after the virus has been detected by passive surveillance in horses. EU dead bird surveillance may not be as useful as no mortality has been detected, further only few bird species seem to play a major role as hosts for blood meals of mosquitoes, based on preliminary research carried out in Italy and Spain. Therefore Spain would like to receive advice on which European target avian wild species are best used for active WNF surveillance aiming at early detection of virus circulation. It was

agreed that Spain would send a request to this end to the AHAW Network members.

4.16.2. Significance of non-psittaci *Chlamydia* (*gallinacea*, *avium*) in poultry flocks for animal and public health?

The Netherlands reported outcomes from surveillance of layer farms for zoonotic pathogens carried out in 2015/16, which identified 33% of tested farms as having one or more positive samples by 23S Chlamydia PCR. While all samples were negative in a specific *C. psittaci* PCR, almost 35% of 154 farms were PCR positive for *C. gallinacea* and no *C. avium* was detected. The questions if *C. gallinacea* has a zoonotic potential, and if it is a pathogen for chickens, were raised. Members of the AHAW Network are invited to send any relevant information on this issue to the Dutch colleagues.

4.16.3. Invasive mosquitos Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus - the potential for viruses to jump from one mosquito species to another, mosquito host preference and degree of urbanisation?

The UK presented recent findings on invasive mosquitos and raised questions regarding the potential for viruses to jump from one mosquito species to another, mosquito host preference and the degree of urbanisation. EFSA explained in detail the activities of the Vectornet project and how it could contribute to clarifying these questions. Under the project, existing data is collated and new data is generated on the distribution and abundance of a range of vectors of human and animal pathogens.

4.16.4. Chronic Wasting Disease – surveillance carried out in countries, populations of wild and captive cervidae at risk, activities of hunters?

In the context of the recent detection of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Norway, the UK raised questions regarding surveillance activities in countries and the risk for wild and captive cervidae. It was pointed out that the EFSA BIOHAZ Panel is working on the issue and that the questions raised by UK could be forwarded to them.

4.17. Short updates

4.17.1. Healthy-B – update on the current EFSA mandate

EFSA presented the mandate on Healthy-B and gave an overview of the different ToR and how they are being addressed in the scientific opinion. It was pointed out that the EFSA objective is to improve the current data collections related to bees to use the data more efficiently, and that EFSA would like to identify where it could support MS in relation to bee health. Such areas could be refining description of indicators and factors, defining case definitions, identifying the

most suitable methods for harmonised data collection, and an on-line system to support EU reporting.

4.17.2. Re-emergence of tularemia in the Netherlands after more than 50 years of absence

The Netherlands presented information on tularemia which re-emerged in 2011 in humans and hares. Cases are distributed over the entire country, no voles or potential vectors have been found positive, but 11of 12 hares submitted for testing and several water and sediment samples were found Ft positive.

4.17.3. Update on Q-fever in the Netherlands

The Netherlands presented an update on Q-fever in the Netherlands, highlighting the extent of the outbreak and the measures taken to control it. A case in goats/animals initially had been defined as "abortion wave", and was later replaced by "bulk milk sample positive AND more than average abortion rate OR PCR positive". The role of pigs in this outbreak has not been considered, but the role of cats was assessed; however, no cats were found positive when tested for the pathogen.

5. Any Other Business

European Animal Health and Welfare Research Collaborative Working Group
A presentation summarising the Animal Welfare Subgroup meeting in April 2016 was provided.

EU Animal Welfare Platform
Meeting participants expressed their interest to receive an update on high-level meetings related to welfare through the AHAW Network.