

Network on Animal Health and Welfare Minutes of the 12th meeting

**Held on 11-12 May 2017, Parma, Italy
(Agreed on 09 June 2017)**

Participants

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

Country	Name
Austria	Friedrich Schmoll
Belgium	Stephanie Vanhamme
Bulgaria	Madlen Vasileva
Croatia	Tomislav Mikus
Cyprus	Yiola Iacovou
Czech Republic	Eva Rencova
Denmark	Else Enemark
Estonia	David Richard Arney
Finland	Taina Mikkonen
France	Laure Paget
Germany	Michael Marahrens
Greece	Katerina Marinou
Hungary	Anna Zsófia Oszoli
Ireland	Niall O'Nuallain
Iceland	Thora Johanna Jónasdóttir
Italy	Fabrizio De Massis
Latvia	Rudite Varna
Luxembourg	Carlo Georges
Netherlands	Beatrix Piepers
Norway	Dean Basic
Poland	Przemyslaw Cwynar
Portugal	Maria Jorge Correia
Slovakia	Zuzana Hurníková
Spain	Teresa Villalba
Sweden	Lotta Nordensten
Switzerland	Liv Sigg
United Kingdom	Rebeca Garcia

Participants from pre-accession countries

Country	
Albania	Matilda Xhepa
Bosnia And Herzegovina	Dzemil Hajric
FYROM	Biljana Smilenovska
Montenegro	Drago Marojevic
Serbia	Miso Kolarevic
Turkey	Yasin Şen

- **Experts**

INRA multidisciplinary expertise group: Muriel Dunier, Pierre Le Neindre, Pierre Mormede, Patrick Prunet, Claudia Terlouw

Members of AHAW Panel: Andrew Butterworth, Sandra Edwards, Virginie Michel, Mohan Raj, Hans Spoolder, Antonio Velarde, Christoph Winckler

Moderators: Howard Browman, Linda Keeling

- **Hearing Experts:** Eric van der Sommen (NL)

- **European Commission:**

SANTE: Denis Simonin (via videoconference on 12th May 2017)

- **EFSA:**

ALPHA Unit: Denise Candiani (Chair), Chiara Fabris, Frank Verdonck, Nikolaus Kriz (Head of ALPHA Unit)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

Apologies were received from Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Romania and Slovenia.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 11th meeting of the AHAW Network held on 15-16 November 2016, Parma

The minutes were agreed by written procedure on 30 November 2016 and published on the EFSA website.

4. Topics for discussion

4.1. INRA presentation of the report “Animal consciousness”

Members of a multidisciplinary group of experts from INRA (France) joined the AHAW Network meeting in order to present the external scientific report on “Animal consciousness” that was recently produced by their group. A presentation of key findings from the main chapters of the report was given and finally some conclusions relating to the need for further enhancements to the welfare of livestock animals were presented. In particular the presentations related to: 1) overall presentation of INRA report – structure and organisation (Muriel Dunier), 2) presentation of key findings from chapter 3: consciousness in animals (Patrick Prunet), 3) presentation of key findings from chapter 4: function and phylogeny of consciousness, adaptive function of different types of consciousness (Pierre Mormede), 4) presentation of key findings from chapter 5: processes underlying the construction of conscious perception of sensory and other types of information, including pain (Claudia Terlouw), 6) presentation of the conclusions and recommendations from the INRA report on animal

consciousness (Pierre Le Neindre). A wrap up session was carried out after the presentations and moderated by Professor Howard Browman.

4.2. Exercise on “Identification and prioritisation of animal welfare topics across Member States”

An exercise aimed at the identification and prioritisation of animal welfare topics across Member States was held during this 12th AHAW Network meeting. The aim of this exercise was to identify some AW topics that are of major interest for MSs and where international collaboration amongst risk assessors is desirable. MSs can follow up by initiating collaborations amongst themselves and/or requesting support from EFSA. The exercise was moderated by Professor Linda Keeling. Details and outcomes of the exercise are given in Annex 1.

4.3. Presentation of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare

Denis Simonin (DG SANTE) gave a presentation of the new EU Platform on Animal Welfare via videoconference. The Commission Decision of 24 January 2017 on establishing the Commission Expert Group ‘Platform on Animal Welfare’ aims to promote an enhanced dialogue on animal welfare issues that are relevant at EU level among competent authorities, businesses, civil society and scientists.

To achieve these priorities the Platform will assist the Commission with the development and exchange of coordinated actions on animal welfare with a particular focus on:

1. better application of EU rules on animal welfare, through exchanges of information and best practices and the direct involvement of stakeholders
2. the development and use of voluntary commitments by businesses to further improve animal welfare,
3. the promotion of EU animal welfare standards to valorise the market value of the Union's products at the global level.

The mandate for the EU Platform on Animal Welfare does not aim at changing the legislation, but at presenting proposals to the table and giving expert advice. EFSA is a member of this platform and the first meeting will take place on 6 June 2017 in Brussels.

Annex 1: "Identification and prioritisation of animal welfare topics across Member States"

An exercise aimed at the identification and prioritisation of animal welfare topics across Member States was held with the aim to identify some AW topics that are of major interest for MSs and where international collaboration amongst risk assessors is desirable. MSs can follow up by initiating collaborations amongst themselves and/or requesting support from EFSA.

Before the meeting MSs submitted a total of 14 proposals for AW topics. Three additional topics were proposed by Panel members based on the outcomes of previous AHW Network meetings. Topics were screened and merged when overlapping. The resulting total number of topics that were evaluated in the exercise was 12.

The 12 topics were presented and briefly discussed to clarify the suggested risk assessment question. Topics are listed in Table 1 here below; following the discussion, for some topics it was agreed that a further subdivision was needed as they encompassed more than one specific topic.

Table 1. List of proposed topics

Topic	Further subdivision
1. Housing conditions for rabbits	
2. Welfare of horses in different production systems	
3. Welfare of farmed fish	
4. Impact of enrichment materials in food safety	
5. Water restriction for all farm animals	
6. Long distance transport of spent laying hens	
7. Slaughter of farmed wild animal species	
8. On-farm slaughter and killing	8a. On-farm killing of spent laying hens 8b. Killing of non-food chain animals (surplus, preys etc) 8c. On-farm slaughter for direct supply (poultry and rabbit)
9. On-farm killing for disease control	
10. Impact of poor pre-slaughter animal welfare practices on meat safety and quality	
11. Standardisation of EEG recording and analysis for unconsciousness	
12. Follow up of EFSA reports and opinions	12a. Follow up, actualization, targeting, and impact assessment on EFSA reports and opinions 12b. Interpretation and definition of terms from legislation such as "unnecessary suffering" and "natural behaviour"

Each topic was written on a flip chart paper sheet and hung on the wall of the meeting room. MS representatives were given instructions and asked to evaluate the topics according to four criteria as detailed in Table 2 here below. Each

criterion was represented by a differently coloured sticker. MS representatives were given three stickers of each colour to label the topics that they considered to be most relevant in their countries. In addition MS representatives were given two "golden stickers" if they wanted to indicate one or two topics that could be followed up by their countries by seeking collaboration with other MS and/or requesting EFSA involvement. One MS was unable to take part to the exercise as it was under pre-election period at the time.

Table 2. Criteria for topic evaluation and corresponding sticker colours

Sticker colour	Criterion
	impact at individual animal level (i.e. this topic would significantly improve health and welfare at the individual animal level in my country)
	impact at population level (i.e. this topic would improve health and welfare of a high percentage of the animal population of my country)
	impact on public concern (i.e. in my country there is significant media coverage /public discussion on this topic)
	impact on implementation (i.e. in my country there is a high likelihood of implementation of this topic by the CA in the next 2 years)
	Golden sticker: topic that my country would really like to proceed with (Please use this sticker only if your country might follow up on this topic i.e. seeking collaboration with other MS and/or requesting EFSA involvement Please write the initials of your MS on the golden sticker)

After all stickers had been placed, a count was carried out of the total number of stickers for each criterion and topic. The aim was to prioritise three or more animal welfare topics that could be followed up by collaboration among MSs and/or requesting EFSA involvement. Table 3 below report the results of the scoring exercise. Grey highlighted rows are the priority topics, namely those that based on the scoring exercise were selected for further discussion in sub groups.

Table 3. Results of the scoring exercise and priority topics (grey highlighted)

Topic	Impact individual	Impact population	Public concern	Implementation	Total Score	Golden sticker
Topic 1. Welfare of rabbits	4	9	1	7	21	0
Topic 2. Welfare of horses	10	4	5	1	20	0
Topic 3. Welfare of fish	5	18	5	5	33	IC, CH, GR, NO
Topic 4. Impact of enrichment	1	3	2	2	8	AT
Topic 5. Water restriction	9	8	2	3	22	EE
Topic 6. Spent hen transport	8	6	3	4	21	FR, PT, NL
Topic 7. Slaughter of farm wild animals	7	4	4	3	18	NO, SE, FI, EE
Topic 8a. Killing spent hens	2	6	1	0	9	FR
Topic 8b. Non-food animal killing	3	2	7	6	18	NL, CH
Topic 8c. On farm slaughter for direct supply	4	4	1	7	16	FI, HR, GR
Topic 9. Killing for disease control	10	7	9	7	33	BG, IT, LV, DE, AT, IC
Topic 10. Pre-slaughter welfare	6	3	12	3	24	BU
Topic 11. EEGs	1	2	1	2	6	0
Topic 12a. EFSA updates	0	0	5	1	6	ES, DE, PT, HR
Topic 12b. Definitions from legislation	0	1	5	5	11	DK

It was noted that some topics scored high (high number of stickers) for all 4 criteria resulting in the highest total score (c.f. topic 3 and topic 9). These were included in the prioritised topics for further discussion. On the other hand, there were topics that demonstrated a high score for the impact on animal welfare at the individual or population level but with a low impact on public concern or likelihood of implementation (e.g. topic 1, 2 and 5). It was agreed that these were not to be considered for further discussion, although they can still be relevant for a few member states. Other topics showed a medium to high total score, a great impact on public concern or likelihood of implementation and an associated possible interest to follow up by the MSs (golden sticker). These were included in the prioritised topics for further discussion (topic 7, 8b, 8c, 12).

After the subgroup discussion and following the final discussion in plenary, three topics of high interest to a large number of MS were identified (**high priority topics**). They were topic 3 – welfare of farmed fish, topic 9 – killing for disease control, topic 6 – transport of spent hens. Other topics were considered as **supplementary priority topics** and were those numbered as 7, 8b, 8c, 12a.

For each of the high priority topics and supplementary priority topics, working sub-groups were formed to discuss and list the specific questions that need to be addressed in a risk assessment on those topics. Here below, the outcomes of such discussion are reported in the form of a brief description of the topic together with the specific questions. **Additional topics** that were not considered for further discussion are listed at the end and include a brief description.

High priority topics

Topic 3. Welfare of farmed fish

Description:

Fish is a very diverse animal group with little legal protection. Available information on AW and risk assessment is scarce. Research projects have been carried out since the EFSA statement "Statement of EFSA prepared by the AHAW Panel on: knowledge gaps and research needs for the welfare of farmed fish. The EFSA Journal (2009) 1145, 1-7", and the "fish opinions" published in 2009.

There is still a significant lack of knowledge to address the overall question of what is good welfare for fish with a view to fish production, particularly related to handling and housing.

Updated risk assessment/scientific advice on welfare of farmed fish would be most helpful, including details for MSs to implement in their general regulations.

Slaughter of fish, particularly stunning methods, would also necessitate an update but would require to be addressed in a separate project. Similarly, it is considered necessary to further investigate the concept of pain in fish, separately.

Note: there is an ongoing study outsourced from the EU Commission titled "Welfare of farmed fish: common practices during transport and slaughter".

Specific questions:

Update of the previous opinions for all fish species, including the following aspects:

- Good welfare and animal-based measures (ABMs)
- Environmental aspects (water quality measures)
- Welfare of cleaner fish
- Stocking density
- Tagging
- Hatchery, transport
- Feed restrictions
- Contaminants
- Handling & housing

Topic 9. Development of an animal welfare risk assessment scheme (or guideline) for measures and methods for disease control

Description:

A guideline for the Risk Assessment on Killing of Animals for Disease Control in farm/field environment in emergency cases (e.g. disease outbreaks, natural disasters) should be developed. It is common that, in such a situation, mostly less specialized equipment and sometimes provisional arrangements are used, competitive situations with epidemiological requirements exist and animal epidemiological (and zoonotic) hazards and risks of the measures taken exist.

Therefore, a Risk Assessment of the different methods currently used in practice for the on-farm emergency killing is needed addressing animal welfare aspects but also the risks for disease spread. This should result in guidance on best practices and should be species specific, covering all farm animal species.

Note: there is an ongoing study outsourced from the EU Commission titled "Preparation of best practices on the protection of animals at the time of killing" which covers also aspects related to on-farm killing.

Specific questions:

- Methods efficacy and impact on AW (e.g. decrease in temperature connected with use of liquid carbon dioxide in whole house gassing and related animal welfare concerns)
- Protocols for AW hazard analysis
- Optimal conditions for culling
- New methods e.g. e.g. whole house gassing (WHG) and high expansion foam (HEF) Biosecurity issues
- Best practices
- How to manage risks to AW considering regional differences and country legislative frameworks (e.g. Lumpy Skin Disease)

Topic 6. Long distance transport of spent laying hens

Description:

Spent laying hens are being transported for slaughter, sometimes over long distances. There may be a risk from the view point of animal welfare of transporting these hens under conditions which probably do not meet some basic needs such as food and water. It is compulsory by regulation to provide food and water if animals are transported more than 12h.

Specific questions:

- Does the issue raises because of a perceived low value of individual animals?
- For different avian species (spent hens, turkey, kept tropical birds)
- Precise the needs for water and food supply for transport of more than 12h in poultry
- Needs in relation to transport duration (Transport within EU, Long transport of 12h within EU, Transport outside EU) and species
- Transport conditions
- Effects of transport on welfare
- Efficiency of current systems: sufficiently adequate? Stocking density? Administration & side effects e.g. wet birds
- Definition of new systems usable during transport

Supplementary priority topics

Topic 7. Slaughter of farmed wild animal species

Description:

The slaughtering process of certain farmed animal species, such as bison, ostrich and wild boar, may be carried out on the farm.

Handling and slaughtering of these animals requires special skills and special types of restraining equipment.

Even though a certificate of competence for slaughter is required, there is still a risk of reduced animal welfare caused by unfit equipment, insufficient knowledge as well as inadequate skills due to the low number of animals slaughtered on a routine basis.

For instance, species such as bison or water buffalo are categorized as bovines but differ at slaughter regarding management and/or physiology. Species "novel" for farming purposes have been and are being introduced at fast rate. There is a need for more basic knowledge to update regulatory frameworks and clarify under which legislation each of these species belong.

Specific questions:

- Restraint, handling, transport
- Stunning equipment

- Development of new killing methods
- Emergency slaughter (e.g. reindeer)
- Risk assessment as regards impacts on animal welfare of traditional hunting methods e.g. free shooting vs slaughtering (restraining, stunning and sticking) of farmed wild animals
- Welfare indicators which can be taken at a distance

Topic 8b. Killing non-food producing animals - surplus animals, euthanasia of prey animals to feed reptiles, emergency killing

Description:

There is not enough knowledge on practical and efficient methods for killing animals other than those normally used slaughtered for food e.g. surplus animals (chicks, piglets). For example, alternative methods to CO₂ are needed.

Specific questions:

- Killing methods and animal welfare implications (e.g. should male chickens be killed, what are the current methods and their implications?)
- Methods to reduce surplus (e.g. sex differentiation)
- Alternative methods and animal welfare implications
- Fitness for transport aspects

Topic 8c. On-farm slaughter for direct supply (poultry and rabbit)

Description:

Slaughtering of poultry and rabbits on the farm for direct supply is a growing business. The number of animals that can be slaughtered without a certificate of competence by utilizing the derogation in article 11 of the council regulation 1099/2009 may be quite high, as the maximum number has not yet been established with the committee procedure. As small scale businesses are often unable or unwilling to invest in proper stunning equipment, the development of novel, more affordable equipment (within the requirements of the 1099/2009) for on-farm stunning of poultry and rabbits would be beneficial for their welfare.

The same aspects would need to be clarified for killing at home, usually a sheep, for traditional festivals etc for own consumption.

Specific questions:

- Killing methods and equipment
- Need for validated equipment
- Education of personnel
- Best practices
- Welfare risks
- Biosecurity issue

Topic 12a - Follow up, actualization, targeting, and impact assessment on EFSA reports and opinions

Description:

Political decision makers refer to the EFSA reports and opinions for justifying legal regulations. This requires that the EFSA papers should be as topical as possible. However, some EFSA papers are dating back from 10 years or more. EFSA should revise previous reports and opinions with respect to the requirement for scientific update.

In many areas there are differences in the implementation (and interpretation) of EU legislation between MSs. EFSA should address whether there are scientific reasons for these differences in implementation, for example, whether and to which degree the possibility of implementation may depend from differences in housing systems prevalent in the member states.

One possibility to implement higher animal welfare levels are standard schemes in the private sector (e.g. labelling). EFSA should define scientific animal welfare criteria which can be interpreted and realized in all member states and may constitute a basis for a harmonized welfare scheme within the EU.

The EFSA reports and opinions have a great impact for decisions makers but this impact seems to differ between member states. In order to further improve the significance of EFSA work, the impact of EFSA reports and opinions in the different member states should be evaluated in order to derive approaches for possible improvements and harmonisation among MSs.

Note from EFSA: this is a very important topic. Aspects related to harmonization of risk assessments from MSs falls within the Network remit (this could be a topic for a dedicated Network meeting)

Specific questions:

- Scientific opinions missing on: turkey production, horses, transport by vessels, dogs
- Scientific opinions to be updated: welfare of rabbits, transport (rabbits, exotic animals, some poultry species)
- Scientific opinion impact assessment: tracking of the use of EFSA reports e.g. for those reports that are not included into legislation – how are they implemented at national level e.g. opinions on fish farming and slaughter
- Scientific opinions in general: website of EFSA not user friendly - it needs to be improved

Additional topics

The topics reported here below were not included in the list of high or supplementary priority topics and were not further assessed. Therefore they do not include specific questions, yet a brief description is reported.

Topic 1. Housing conditions for rabbits for meat production

There is no scientific common ground at the moment to score housing conditions in the framework of AW enforcement.

But we know that under specific conditions air contamination concentrations of ammonia can be found that are considered (much) too high in other species like broilers. Other aspects that could be covered are the cages, the space to satisfy their needs and behaviours (foraging, digging, running etc), flooring system, group housing, enrichment material, protection from predators and lack of escape routes.

The European Parliament has stipulated that it is necessary to define acceptable welfare conditions for rabbits kept for meat production (and possibly of those kept for fur production or as pet animals).

Topic 2. Welfare of horses in different rearing conditions (production system)

There is no European regulation regarding horse health and welfare. Horses are raised and used for very different purposes: pets, leisure, sport, meat production. And even for sport, the multiple disciplines lead to very different training practices (racing, jumping, dressage, endurance etc).

In some MSs issues exist related to abandoned horses, horses used for therapy and horses that are used only in certain occasions (e.g. at some ceremony) who can eventually get injured (what to do with these horses).

For some sectors there are several self-regulations by the industry. However, a risk assessment is needed to identify the main key issues regarding horse welfare regardless their specific use (housing, social restriction, feed, training) and then define the specific issue by discipline/usage.

Topic 4. Risk assessment on the impact of enrichment materials (i.e. pecking blocks) on food safety

There have been discussions flagging up that some enrichment materials might contain contaminants that may make their way into food. It would be good to understand the risks for animal health and welfare (e.g. suitability of pecking blocks, animal health and cage hygiene) and for human food safety presented by different materials to establish best practice guidance in this area.

Topic 5. All farm animals: water restriction

With the exception of the regulation for pigs, legislation is ambiguous in formulating water availability for farm animals.

It is sometimes commercial practice to shut down water provision for broilers for several hours during each day, and to provide water only for limited periods for cattle housed inside. Also, in some islands, there is a need to motivate farmers to provide fresh water for animals when farmers know that sheep can survive on salt water. OIE guidelines refer to 'drinkable water – free of contaminants'. Weather conditions must also be taken into account, for example water may freeze during winter whereas algae blooms can cause huge problems during summer.

There is a need to define what water of good quality is and what the risk of restricted water provision is in farm animals.

Topic 10. Risk assessment on the impact of poor pre-slaughter animal welfare practices in meat safety (and quality?)

There have been a number of publications and practical reports about the impacts of pre-slaughter handling on animal welfare and on meat safety and meat quality. It would be good to undertake a risk assessment to identify key factors and support implementation of welfare legislation and best practice.

Topic 11. Standardisation of EEG recording and analysis for unconsciousness

EEG is the most sensitive and specific method to assess unconsciousness (EFSA guidance, 2013). However, there is no consistency in the recording and analysis of the EEG, resulting in difficulties in the interpretation and assessment of consciousness.

A harmonisation and standardisation of the EEG recording and analysis is needed. It includes specification of the relevant parameters (e.g. electrode position on the skull or on the brain itself, configuration of the electrodes (transhemispheric or from the same hemisphere of the brain), background noise filtration method employed in the data acquisition and analysis), as well as the criteria for the assessment of unconsciousness. There is also a need for harmonisation of certain terms from the legislation which are used inconsistently e.g. unconsciousness, insensibility and death.

Topic 12b. Interpretation of terms from legislation such as “unnecessary suffering” and “natural behaviour”

The wording of EU legislation directly or indirectly concerning animal welfare often does not conform with the scientific meanings of these terms. This can lead to confusion and variation in interpretation of the legislation, for example in the interpretation of terms such as “unnecessary suffering” and “natural behaviour”.