

## MINUTES OF THE XXXIII PLENARY MEETING OF THE PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

13-14 MARCH 2008

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## **PARTICIPANTS**

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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION:** S. Osaer (DG SANCO),

EFSA: E. Franchi, I. Kralova V. Abratzky (administrative staff AHAW Unit). A. Afonso, E. Aiassa S. Barbieri, F. Berthe, S. Correia Rodeia., D. Candiani, F. De Massis, S. Dhollander, T. Grudnik, P. Have, M. Georgiev and J. Serratos (Scientific Coordination AHAW Unit),

### **1. WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman welcomed the participants and no member declared any conflict of interest on the items on the agenda. Apologies were received from the Panel members B. Algers, P. Costa, M. Domingo, D. Morton, D. Pfeiffer, M. Sharp, M. Wooldridge, M. Ferrara and invited observers from OIE and FAO.

### **2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was adopted. A new point was introduced concerning possible Panel members to participate in 3 different scientific events to be discussed under Miscellaneous (Minute 7).

### **3. PREVIOUS MINUTES ADOPTED BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE**

The minutes of the previous 32<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Meeting held in Parma on the 30-31 January 2008 were unanimously adopted by written procedure by Panel members 12 February 2008 and published on the web (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu>).

## **4. COMMISSION SERVICES (CS) NEW MANDATES**

### **4.1. State of play of new mandates**

The Commission official explained that a new mandate on fish susceptible species has been sent and a kick off meeting took place between the chairman of the WG, EFSA scientific secretariat, and the Commission officials (further explanations are given in Minute 6.9)

A draft self -mandate on the assessment of the Public Health significance of Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) was presented by EFSA scientific staff of BIOHAZ Unit. The Terms of Reference were discussed and some members of the AHAW panel expressed their interest to participate in the future WG together with BIOHAZ Panel.

Some of the discussion points were: (i) the issue of the inclusion of pets in the mandate, (ii) the fact that food-producing animals and foods derived there from, are the main focus of the draft mandate, (iii) possible animal health implications of MRSA, (iv) direct transmission *versus* food-borne transmission of MRSA from animals (food producing animals and pets) to humans.

The multidisciplinary nature of the mandate was emphasized, and the possibility to involve EMEA and ECDC was suggested. The options for adoption of the resulting opinion were also discussed, with a suggestion to coordinate between all scientific players and possibly to aim for co-adoption by all the scientific partners.

## **5. OPINIONS AND REPORTS SUBMITTED FOR POSSIBLE ADOPTION/ACCEPTANCE**

### **5.1. Fish Welfare - Trout**

The last meeting was held on 27/28th of February. Comments from WG members and Panel members in relation to the approach followed by Salmon welfare WG were discussed. During this meeting the WG developed a roadmap in order to improve the clarity of the report; and avoid possible unbalanced aspects and conclusions not based on evidence. A new deadline of 31 March was agreed for submission of contributions for completion of the report. It was also decided to invite Panel members for a transversal meeting on the 14/4. The roadmap and draft 8 rev 0 of trout welfare was presented and discussed for comments.

### **5.2. Fish Welfare - Atlantic salmon report**

The salmon report was sent with all track changes to the Panel members on 1 February, deadline for comments was 25 February. The comments and new data presented by the MS experts and stakeholders invited to the consultation meeting on Fish welfare and received by EFSA secretariat till 7 March were included into the draft 11 submitted to the Panel. A summary of the main issues/comments was presented by EFSA secretariat.

The Panel was informed that on 4 March 2008 a stakeholders/advisory forum meeting on fish welfare took place in Parma. The Salmon Welfare report was submitted for consultation. The meeting had a good participation and representation of different stakeholders; It was acknowledged that the report constitutes a comprehensive review of scientific papers but critical review and discussion of the cited references was felt insufficient for specific issues with highlights for non-relevant citations (extrapolation from wild to farmed, experimental to farmed, etc). It was suggested that some sections could be more concise with clearer statements;

The Industry requested a broader representation of the production sector; and strong request was made on the need to give the stakeholders more time to revise the report. Therefore it was proposed to give the 28 March as new deadline for submission of relevant data and comments, for further consideration at the transversal meeting on 14 April

### **5.3. Discussion of the draft document on aquatic disease definitions**

Following mandate EFSA-Q-2007-044, the AHAW Panel had noted that the definitions provided as part of the Mandate by the Commission, for “disease”, “susceptible species” and “vector” were different from those commonly used in the peer-reviewed papers of the scientific literature. Such discrepancies were seen as a potential source of confusion for risk assessment and it was decided to explain where/how contextual definitions and scientific definitions fail to concur. A working document was initially presented to the members of the Panel for discussion during the December Plenary and further refined since then. It was agreed to submit for possible adoption the document as a statement. The final version was circulated by Email immediately after the Plenary and due to the different comments and amendments received by Panel members the document will be discussed at the next plenary meeting in May 6-7<sup>th</sup> for possible adoption. The document will be published as soon as adopted together with the plenary minutes.

### **5.4. Discussion on the draft document on good practices for conducting scientific assessments using modelling**

A draft document on good practices for conducting scientific assessments using modelling was presented by M. Greiner. The version presented is the result of a discussion and an exchange of contributions and comments among AHAW Panel’s “modellers”. This draft can be the basis for a discussion within the Panel rather than a final guideline. Considering the usefulness of this document, the Panel decided to work on it further.

## **6. WRITTEN COMMENTS ON THE STATE OF PLAY OF THE SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS AND REPORTS**

### **6.1. Fish welfare-Carp:**

The Carp welfare WG was started in the fall 2007. The WG meetings were held in October and December 2007 and January and March 2008. The scientific report (draft3rev1) has been circulated for a last round of contributions from the WG and finalisation of the risk assessment. to be received by 4 March . The report on carp welfare is expected to be completed late April/early May to be submitted for possible adoption by the AHAW Panel during the June Plenary Meeting.

### **6.2. Fish welfare-Sea bass and gilthead sea bream:**

The first meeting was on the 10 March it is expected that the WG will meet 2 more times (April 29-30, and May 29-30)in order to finalize the scientific report for possible adoption by the AHAW Panel in June. During the first meeting, the table of content of the report was adopted and distribution of tasks was agreed.

### **6.3. Fish welfare-European eel:**

The first meeting of the Eel Welfare WG was held on the 10 March in conjunction with the first meeting of the sea bass / sea bream WG meeting. It is planned that the WG will meet on April 28-29, and May 27-27, in order to finalize the scientific report for possible adoption by the AHAW Panel in June. During the first meeting, the table of content of the report was adopted and distribution of tasks was agreed.

### **6.4. Welfare of Dairy Cows**

The report contains a huge amount of scientific information therefore has considerably increased its size and it is expected to become a large Scientific Report. Therefore, the proposal to split the opinion in separate parts was discussed and accepted during the last WG meeting (5-6 March).

EFSA secretariat, together with the WG, will present a proposal of publication of the different S. Opinions, to cover all the aspects of the current mandate as a reply to the Commission. Next WG meeting will be held next 24 - 25 April.

### **6.5. Avian Influenza - follow up**

EFSA received on October 16 2007, a request for an opinion on avian influenza from DG SANCO. The terms of reference are divided in two questions: a) an update and consolidation of conclusions and recommendations of the 5 previous opinions on avian influenza in the light of new scientific information, and b) scientific advice and assessment of risk factors for introducing and spread of AI in poultry holdings.

Two working groups were organised on January 31<sup>st</sup> and on February 26. A second draft was produced which consisted out of revised chapters of the previous opinions on AI. The third work group will be held on March 27<sup>s</sup> and the transversal meeting is foreseen on April 17. A letter was written to the commission to inform that the opinion will be presented to the AHAW Panel for possible adoption on the plenary meeting of 5/6 May 2008.

### **6.6. Classical Swine Fever**

An official letter has been sent to the Commission in order to confirm the postpone of the deadline to January 2009 and the inclusion of the two sentences of clarification of the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of reference: a) *What is the risk that wild type virus is present in fresh meat obtained from pigs*

*vaccinated in an emergency situation during an outbreak?; b) What are the sampling schemes and testing procedures needed to be applied to detect field virus in fresh meat derived from pigs vaccinated following an emergency vaccination during an outbreak?* A questionnaire on the hunting practices as a measure to control CSF is being prepared and will be distributed to the MS. The next meeting will be held on the 18 and 19 March.

#### **6.7. Bluetongue: Field data on possible Transplacental transmission**

The deadline for possible adoption (June 2008) has been accepted. Next WG meetings are scheduled for 26-27 March 2008 and 8-10 April 2008. A Transversal meeting has been scheduled for 20-21 May. The Opinion is expected to be finalized for May 30 in order to be presented for possible adoption during the 17-18 June Plenary.

The COM was informed by the UK authorities that, after the introduction of pregnant cattle from the BTV-8 restriction zones in the Netherlands onto a premise in Northern Ireland (NI) in early January 2008, BTV was isolated from three calves and two cows on that premise. The UK authorities has reported these facts at the CVO meeting on 22 February, then the COM held a meeting of a Working Group on BT in Brussels on 27 Feb. 2008. The CRL suggested that one possible explanation of this outbreak would be transplacental transmission and oral transmission (ingestion of placenta). Following the precautionary principle, an amendment to the current BT legislation (1266/2007/EC) was approved on the meeting of the SCoFCAH held on 4-5 March 2008 in Brussels, allowing the movement of pregnant animals only if they were vaccinated or naturally immunized before mating or seronegative following at least 28 days of protection from vector attack.

The implications of these new findings on viraemia, overwintering and transmission will be discussed at the WG meeting that will be held on 8-10 April. The Panel agreed to draft a list of scientific questions with the support of the WG experts, addressed to the Commission in order to define the scientific data which could provide scientific evidence for confirming or not transplacental transmission. EFSA received on the 14 March a copy from the Commission services concerning the proposed CRL testing protocol in relation with possible transplacental transmission of BT virus. The document was discussed by the members, in general most of the possible questions were covered and comments/suggestions for possible completion will be sent to the Commission as soon as possible after getting the comments from the WG experts.

#### **6.8. Self-mandate Animal Welfare**

The EFSA self-mandate on the development of the RA Guidelines for AW will be partly carried out through grants under Article 36. The AW issues to be considered in the Guidelines have been divided in the following main categories: stunning and killing, transport, housing and management. Following these categories, a grant under Article 36 was awarded last December 2007 in order to develop the AW RA Guidelines for stunning and killing. A second call for the development of the part of the Guidelines related to transport is to be launched early 2008, with the final objective to finalise the AW RA Guidelines by 2009.

#### **6.9. Fish: susceptible species**

This mandate was received late February concerning an update of the list of species (fish, crustaceans and molluscs) susceptible to aquatic diseases covered by the Council Directive 2006/88/EC. The chairman of the new working was elected. A kick-off meeting with the Commission services was organised on February 29. A letter of acceptance of this mandate was drafted and should be sent to the Commission in the coming days. Experts were selected and

contacted to be part of the working group. The CVs of the selected experts were posted on the [AHAW workspace](#). The hyperlink was distributed by Email before the plenary; The first meeting of the WG is scheduled in Paris for March 17. Given that this mandate has been given a very short deadline, the set of criteria used to reply this question were discussed during the Plenary and agreed. The three criteria are: A. presence of a viable organism, B. evidence of replication, C. pathological changes. A transversal meeting may be proposed to the Panel on May 6, before the 34<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting.

#### **6.10. Feedstuffs and Salmonella**

The Panel member participating in the working group on feedstuff and *Salmonella* explained the current state of play of this opinion under the leadership of BIOHAZ Panel, stressing the main points of interest for the AHAW Panel.

### **7. MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **7.1. Adopted opinions**

**Tuberculosis testing in deer:** The opinion has been adopted in January's plenary. EFSA scientific staff with the support of the Chairman revised the scientific report according to some improvements in the disease freedom model. Through this process a few conclusions of the opinion needed to be revised. An adoption of these changes following the written procedure was conducted and finalised on the 29 February. The Opinion has been published in the EFSA web on the 11 March.

#### **7.2. EXTRANET follow up**

AHAW workspace has recently expanded. The Panel members were requested to express their comments on the current system of communications. The AHAW question table (beta) is still under testing by few WG as a simple access for experts. If successful, a further version will be proposed as a standard for all WGs. For any technical problem (browser compatibility, access and rights,...) it is requested to send a request to EFSA helpdesk .

#### **7.3. Discussion to prepare the meeting with Commission officials responsible for animal diseases and welfare.**

EFSA/AHAW secretariat would like to launch a written request to all Panel members to prepare a questionnaire to be forwarded to the Commission officials for the meeting foreseen in May/June. EFSA invited SANCO officials responsible for animal diseases and welfare to give feed-back to the Panel on the opinions requested by SANCO and to exchange of points of view between risk assessors and risk managers.

#### **7.4. Information on AHAW Rules of procedure for conducting scientific opinions**

As agreed in the previous plenary meeting EFSA/AHAW secretariat will circulate a updated version of the Rules of procedure including the new format of the WG minutes to be included in the EFSA web for possible acceptance at the next plenary meeting.

#### **7.5. Participation of AHAW members at different scientific events**

##### **7.5.1. *Advisory Forum meeting on Animal health 27-28 May in Parma.***

EFSA secretariat explained the preparatory work for this meeting. Two members of the Panel members and the chairman will attend.

##### **7.5.2. *Emergent risks working group in the Scientific Committee***

It was discussed the interest to participate in this WG and one member was appointed to represent the AHAW Panel.

**7.5.3.** *Workshop on “RA terminology and approaches to evaluating Scientific evidence on environmental and health issues*

The members of the Panel decided to encourage the participation of one member of the Panel with the broad expertise on Risk assessment.

**7.5.4.** *Presentation of World Bank activities on Animal Health*

Martin Wierup presented the current activities of the World bank concerning animal health issues. The overall objective is: “How can we reduce hunger and poverty, improve rural livelihoods and facilitate equitable, socially, environmentally and economically sustainable development through the generation, access to and use of agricultural knowledge, science and technology?”

**7.6. Next Plenary Meeting**

The next plenary meeting will take place in Parma on the 6 May (from 09.00 to 18.00h) and on the 7 May (from **08.30 to 15.30h**). The plenary meeting on June should be extended to 3 days if possible in order to be able to discuss for possible adoption the opinions on fish welfare and Bluetongue. The plenary is foreseen the 17-18 Tuesday and Wednesday, one possibility is to include Monday or Thursday. EFSA secretariat will circulate a proposal date for acceptance by written procedure.