

## **ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE UNIT**

# **MINUTES OF THE 52<sup>nd</sup> PLENARY MEETING OF THE PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE**

**08-09 September, 2010, Parma**

## **1. PARTICIPANTS**

### **AHAW PANEL MEMBERS**

Anette Bøtner, Don Broom, Mariano Domingo, Marcus G. Doherr, Jörg Hartung, Linda Keeling, Frank Koenen, Simon More, David Morton, Pascal Oltenacu, Fulvio Salati, Mo Salman, Moez Sanaa, James Michael Sharp, Jan Arend Stegeman, Endre Szücs, Hans-Hermann Thulke, Philippe Vannier, Martin Wierup.

### **EFSA AHAW UNIT**

Scientific officers: Ana Afonso, Franck Berthe, Sandra Correia Rodeia, Milen Georgiev, Tomasz Grudnik, Per Have, Oriol Ribó, Jordi Tarres.

Administrative assistant: E. Franchi.

### **EUROPEAN COMMISSION (DG SANCO)**

Marina Marini (Unit 03, Science and Stakeholders), Alberto Laddomada (Unit D1, Animal Health and Standing Committees, joined the meeting for the agenda item 9.1), Maria Pitman (Unit D1, joined the meeting by phone for the agenda item 6.1), Sigrid Cabot (Unit D1, joined the meeting by phone for the agenda item 7.1).

### **EUROPEAN CENTER FOR DISEASES CONTROL AND PREVENTION (ECDC)**

Hervé Zeller, Vim Van Bortel (Unit on Vector Borne Diseases).

## **2. OPENING, APOLOGIES AND AGENDA**

The Chairman welcomed the Panel members and other attendants. Apologies were received from Albert Osterhaus and John Webster.

The agenda was adopted.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Declarations of Interests (DoI), EFSA screened the Annual and Specific Declaration of Interest (SDoI) provided by the Panel Members for the present meeting. No new interests were declared in the SDoIs submitted in relation to the current agenda. The previously declared interests were still considered valid for this

plenary<sup>1,2</sup>. The Panel Members confirmed that no further declarations of interests were to be made in the context of the adopted agenda.

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

The minutes of the 51<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting of the AHAW Panel were unanimously adopted by written procedure and published on the EFSA web (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu>).

#### **5. NEW MANDATES**

Alberto Laddomada presented the Animal Health Strategy (see item 9.1); he also informed the Panel that the Commission was preparing a possible mandate on Bluetongue.

#### **6. OPINIONS SUBMITTED FOR ADOPTION**

##### **6.1. Potential implications of the current H1N1 pandemic influenza for animal health (EFSA-Q-2009-00935)**

The draft opinion on potential implications of the current H1N1 pandemic influenza for animal health was presented to the Panel for adoption.

The mandate requested to: 1) assess the significance for the health of animals of different species (specially pigs and different poultry sectors) of the occurrence of pH1N1 virus in the EU and elsewhere; 2) assess the implications and consequences of the possible evolution of the pH1N1 virus on animal health; 3) assess the effectiveness and efficiency of disease control options such as establishing animal movement restrictions in protection and surveillance zones, culling of infected pig herds and contact herds for pH1N1 virus, as it is common practice for notifiable diseases (e.g. CSF, AI, FMD); 4) assess the risk that animals from a herd/ flock which was infected with pH1N1 virus spread the virus after the last clinical signs of disease have been observed; 5) assess the possibility, efficacy and efficiency of vaccination, using existing vaccines or newly developed vaccines against pH1N1 virus, in pig and poultry populations also in relation with possible evolution of variants of influenza viruses posing a serious risk to public and animal health; and 6) assess the role of wildlife, in particular wild boar and wild birds in the epidemiology of pH1N1 virus, if any.

In January 2010, the Panel established an ad hoc Working Group chaired by Anette Bøtner. The WG is composed of several Panel members, representative from EMA, EURL for AI, and two networks dealing with Influenza - ESNIP and OFFLU. The WHO provided support

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<sup>1</sup> In the SDoI filled for the January plenary meeting of the AHAW Panel, Dr. P. Vannier declared the following interest: oyster mortality. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on declarations of interests and implementing documents thereof, the interest was deemed to represent a potential conflict of interest. Pursuant to EFSA's Procedure on Identifying and Handling Declarations of Interest point C.III.b, the said expert should not chair discussions related to the mandate on oyster mortality. For this discussion, Dr M. Sharp chaired the Panel.

<sup>2</sup> In the SDoI filled for the January plenary meeting of the AHAW Panel, Prof. A. Osterhaus declared the following interest: pandemic influenza virus. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on declarations of interests and implementing documents thereof, the interest was deemed to represent a potential conflict of interest. Pursuant to EFSA's Procedure on Identifying and Handling Declarations of Interest point C.III.b, the said expert should not chair discussions related to pandemic influenza virus.

on human health aspects of the humans-animals interface. IFAH was consulted for new vaccines intended for swine pH1N1. The WG produced a scientific report compiling all the data and information required to reply to the terms of reference of the mandate.

The opinion does not bring new elements to be considered in relation of the request received by EFSA to comment the EM/CVMP reflection paper on data requirements for swine influenza vaccines against pH1N1.

During the plenary, Anette Bøtner presented the draft opinion with emphasis on the set of conclusions and recommendations related to each ToR. This was discussed with the Panel and adopted by unanimity on September 08.

## **6.2. The geographical distribution of ticks and tick-borne diseases in Europe and the Mediterranean basin (EFSA-Q2009-00595)**

The draft opinion on geographic distribution of the relevant ticks and maps of Eurasia displaying their occurrences was presented to the Panel for adoption.

The mandate requested to: 1) provide a review of the geographic distribution of the relevant ticks and produce maps of Eurasia displaying their occurrences; 2) review surveillance data to provide estimates of the relevant tick abundance and disease incidence in Eurasia; 3) describe the factors that define the relevant tick population dynamics and identify possible high risk areas in the EU for introduction considering the biological and ecological characteristics of the ticks and their ability to adapt to new areas; 4) provide an update of the role of the relevant vectors in the transmission and maintenance of ASF and CCHF in Eurasia; and 5) review available methods for the control of the relevant ticks.

This opinion addressed only the first term of reference of the mandate. The opinion on Ticks as Vectors of African swine fever and Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (addressing the rest of the terms of reference) was adopted by the Panel in July 2010; this opinion is published on the EFSA web (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu>).

During the plenary, the chair presented to the Panel the changes made in the draft opinion: 1) a new section on the limitations of the report, 2) new and more general conclusions were drawn from the draft opinion, and 3) a summary was proposed. The Panel members reviewed these changes and suggested further modifications in the section on limitations and in some conclusions. The chair also presented the evolution of the layout of the maps. The table with the comments received from Panel members and from ECDC representatives was revised, and minor changes were made in some of the corresponding answer from the WG members. The opinion was adopted on September 08.

The Panel acknowledged the efforts made in the development of a database for the purpose of this opinion and recognised the need to sustain it in the perspective of possible further questions (e.g. CCHF). Representatives from ECDC also expressed interest in the data collected by EFSA since it provides valuable information on the situation in animal population and matches current efforts of ECDC to develop and establish a live database on vector borne diseases. It was recognised that the EFSA dataset would constitute a baseline to the ECDC database. It was stressed that the recent outbreaks of WNF in Greece call for better integration of public health and animal health. All parties expressed the will to pursue further collaboration.

## 7. DRAFT OPINIONS SUBMITTED FOR DISCUSSION IN FIRST READING

### 7.1. Increased mortality events in Pacific oysters (EFSA-Q-2010-11)<sup>3</sup>

**The mandate:** in view of the increased mortality events that occurred in 2008-2009 in France, Ireland and UK the EC requested to assess the role and possible importance of: 1) infectious agents with special focus on new genotype of Ostreid herpesvirus-1 (OsHV-1) named OsHV-1  $\mu$ var as possible aetiological agents; 2) climatic, seasonal or other environmental factors in their occurrence; 3) other mollusc species which could be involved; and 4) to evaluate the scientific background that may justify the authorisation to transfer adult oysters (older than 18 months) when they are sourced from an area affected by the increased mortality events.

**The approach:** an ad hoc expert Working Group was established in March 2010 and chaired by Fulvio Salati. A literature review on mortality on Pacific oysters (*Crassostrea gigas*) was performed. Epidemiological data provided by the Community Reference Laboratory for mollusc diseases, but also from country reports delivered to the EC and other reports / risk assessments by National agencies, were also considered by the WG. The draft opinion was submitted for discussion. A consultation with the Animal Health Network is planned for the second half of September.

Fulvio Salati gave a detailed presentation of the status of the draft opinion discussions. There is some concern regarding lack of clarity and consistency in the scientific data and epidemiological information. The Panel recognised that this situation will probably be a major drawback for conclusions and a strong driver for recommendations.

The Panel indicated the lack of clear case definitions and that the term “summer mortality” is used by various authors to describe events involving different life stages, with or without association with infectious agents. It was agreed that a section of the opinion should address this issue.

The Panel discussed the question of OsHV-1  $\mu$ var as a “new genotype” and agreed that information on the genetic diversity of the Ostreid herpesvirus-1 (OsHV-1) is still missing.

Although the oyster farming practices appear not to have significantly changed, there has probably been a shift over the past decade with increased contribution of the hatcheries in providing oyster spat. It was however difficult to assess this shift since data available in published papers is highly inconsistent with figures ranging from 10% to 60% contribution. It was suggested to invite a hearing expert to clarify this point.

The draft opinion will be submitted at the coming October plenary for adoption.

### 7.2. Practice of harvesting feathers from live geese for down production (EFSA-Q-2009-00966)

**The mandate:** the Commission requested EFSA to assess the welfare of geese from which feathers are harvested for down production, preferably in two steps: 1) data from scientific

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<sup>3</sup> This part of the meeting was chaired by Michael Sharp – see section 3.

studies and from stakeholders should be collected and assessed, such as, a) physiology of moulting in geese b) conditions under which the practice of harvesting feathers from live geese is carried out; c) welfare aspects of keeping geese for down and meat production; c) differences in quality between feathers collected from live geese and feathers collected in slaughterhouses; d) quantity of feathers harvested from live animals and the quantity collected after slaughter; 2) the scientific opinion should evaluate: a) whether it is possible to make a clear distinction between the plucking and harvesting of feathers from live geese and which criteria could be used; b) whether harvesting feathers from live geese can be carried without causing unnecessary pain, suffering or injury to the birds; c) the welfare impact of the practice of harvesting feathers; d) whether there is a difference in quality between feathers collected from live geese and at slaughterhouses; e) which animal-based indicators could be used to assess the welfare of geese submitted to this practice.

**The approach** The WG assembled data and background information on the possibility to distinct between different qualities of the procedure of feather collection. Scientific background on physiology of moulting in geese was established. The welfare aspects of keeping geese for down and meat production are provided with emphasis on the needs of geese, and pain or stress in geese due to feather collection procedure.

Existing systems of goose husbandry and utilisation were described considering domestication and selection of geese, commercial practice as well as detailed housing and management issues. The impact of the practice on geese welfare was assessed using animal-based indicators of adverse effects on welfare in geese submitted to the procedure of feather collection, indicators practical for on farm inspection, and a semi-quantitative relation between magnitude and likelihood of identified welfare compromises due to the procedure.

The draft opinion will be submitted at the coming October plenary for adoption.

## **8. PROGRESS REPORTS AND DISCUSSION OF CURRENT MANDATES**

### **8.1. Monitoring for emergence of possible new pandemic influenza strains (EFSA-Q-2009-00983)**

**The mandate:** following the global spread of pandemic H1N1 in 2009 risk managers will require a better scientific understanding of influenza viruses and in particular of the underlying factors that most strongly contribute to the emergence on influenza viruses with pandemic potential. It is also necessary to develop better methods and criteria to asses the risk such viruses may pose to people and animals.

The terms of reference given address the most important factors to be monitored in animals that would suggest a risk of emergence of a new pandemic influenza strain and options of monitoring in different animal populations for the presence of the most important factors that would suggest a risk of emergence of viruses with pandemic potential.

**The approach:** A first tele-meeting has been held with the Chairmen of the two mandates and ECDC representatives to discuss the approach to the ToR. It was agreed that available data do not allow prediction of risk and emergence of a new pandemic influenza strains. The discussion was focused on the need for the assessment of the current surveillance system and identification of the gaps in surveillance.

A scoping document had been circulated to the Panel and presented by Michael Sharp during the plenary meeting for discussions of a realistic approach to this mandate. A working group has been established and an outline of the report has been drafted.

## **8.2. Welfare of Animals during transport (EFSA-Q-2010-00053)**

**The mandate:** the most recent scientific information available on the welfare of animals during transport (after 2004), concerning the main farm species as follows: horses, pigs, sheep, goats, cattle, poultry and rabbits should be assessed. Risks for the welfare of the transported animals should be presented according to the following sections of Annex 1 of the Regulation (EC) No 1/2005: a) fitness for transport; b) means of transport; c) transport practices; d) watering and feeding interval, journey times and resting periods; e) additional provisions for long journeys; f) space allowances. Only outcome-based welfare indicators (i.e. based on the observations of the animals) which can be used by transporters and veterinary inspectors under commercial conditions should be detailed here.

**The approach** a kick-off meeting was organised with the Commission to discuss and clarify the ToRs in January 2010. A WG was constituted on March 2010 to bring ad hoc expertise. The opinion proceeds with a bibliographic review of recently published evidence. The risk assessment focuses on hazards covered by the annex 1 of the 2005 Regulation. In cooperation with JRC, a chapter is developed on methods of monitoring animal transport.

A Technical Meeting with stakeholders is planned to be held on October 13, prior to submitting the opinion to the Panel for discussion at the October AHAW plenary meeting.

## **8.3. Development of Animal Welfare Risk Assessment Guidelines (EFSA-Q-2007-168)**

**The mandate:** The EFSA Scientific Colloquium on “Principles of Risk Assessment of Food Producing Animals” held in Parma in December 2005 concluded that no specific standardized methodology and international guidelines exists in the field of the Animal Welfare Risk Benefit Assessment”. Therefore, EFSA launched in 2007 a self-mandate with the following terms of reference: 1) To define a comprehensive harmonised methodology to evaluate risks and benefits in animal welfare, taking into consideration the various procedures, management and housing systems and the different animal welfare issues, with reference to the methodologies followed in the previous EFSA Opinions on various species; 2) the defined methodology for assessing risks and benefits in animal welfare should take into account and adapt current risk assessment methodologies, for example those for animal diseases and food safety, and also the complex range of measurable welfare outcomes; 3) the guidance document should concisely define the generic approach for working groups addressing specific areas of assessment of risks and benefits in animal welfare.

**The approach** the original mandate was amended in 2009 and a WG formed from Panel members. The main contents of the guidelines have been agreed by the WG.

## **8.4. Use of animal-based measures to assess the welfare of dairy cows**

**The mandate:** The request is to 1) identify how the assessment protocols suggested by the Welfare Quality® project cover the main hazards identified in EFSA scientific opinions (and



vice-versa); 2) identify how animal-based measures could be used to ensure the fulfilment of the recommendations of EFSA scientific opinions on the welfare of dairy cows; 3) identify which relevant animal welfare issues cannot be assessed using animal-based measures for dairy cows and what kind of alternative solutions are available to improve the situation; and 4) list main factors in the various husbandry systems which have been scientifically proven to have negative effects on the welfare of dairy cows.

**The approach** was discussed with the Commission at a kick-off meeting in July by video-conference. Linda Keeling will chair the working group, assisted by Don Broom as vice-chair. Following a kick off meeting with the Commission, the working group has been discussing issues and literature related the ToRs in preparation for their first meeting which will be held end of October in Brussels.

#### **8.5. Development of a Guidance on health and welfare aspects of GM-Animals (EFSA-Q-2010-698)**

In March 2010, the European Commission sent a mandate requesting EFSA to develop guidance on animal health and welfare aspects of GM animals in addition to the guidance on safety assessment of GM animal-derived food and feed. This mandate had been presented by Sebastien Goux (DG SANCO) during the April plenary meeting (web-meeting). EFSA has accepted the mandate, proposing a deadline of December 31, 2011 which was agreed by the Commission. In accordance with its policy on transparency, EFSA will organise a public consultation on the draft guidance of animal health and animal welfare aspects of GM animals. The consultation is planned for the first quarter of 2011.

The guidance will be developed in close cooperation with the guidance on the safety assessment of genetically modified animal-derived food and feed being developed by the GMO Panel. The two guidance documents will form a comprehensive package to be published simultaneously.

The GMO working group has reviewed all the comments of the AHAW Panel on the document presented for adoption at the December's Plenary 2009 and discussed how they were taken into account in the latest version of the document. In the light of the new mandate, welfare issues will be specifically addressed in the new guidance document from AHAW and therefore the GMO guidance will be more focused on the safety issues. However, through close collaboration during the development of the two documents relevant aspects will be incorporated in each of the documents when necessary.

D. Morton (chair) presented the first steps of this mandate. A scoping document was shared with the Panel. A GMO Panel member will also be member of the AHAW WG to act as a link between the two Panels. First WG meeting is planned for October.

#### **8.6. Request for a scientific opinion and technical assistance on the public health hazards to be covered by inspection of meat**

**The mandate:** the Commission requests a scientific opinion and technical assistance on the public health hazards to be covered by inspection of meat. The scope of this mandate is to evaluate possible modernisation of the meat inspection in a public health context. The mandate specifies that any change suggested to current inspection protocols should not

jeopardize the capacity to detect certain animal diseases, nor compliance with the regulation on animal welfare. The animal species or groups of species to be covered are: domestic swine; poultry; bovine animals (over and under 6 weeks old); domestic sheep and goats; farmed game and domestic solipeds.

**The approach:** AHAW is focusing on implications for animal health and welfare of recommended changes to the current meat inspection system (incorporating both ante- and post-mortem inspection components). Data on overall surveillance system (including other components) and methods used for detection of diseases is necessary in order to understand the role and weight of meat inspection. This data is expected to be prepared for the Panel through preparatory work performed under the provisions of the article 36 of the founding regulation. The data will be used as input in a model for assessment. Proposed changes will have to be evaluated for equivalent achievement (in reference to the current meat inspection) considering the overall system performance and potential mitigation measures.

It was agreed to establish a Working Group with Panel members and ad hoc experts (with expertise in modelling and meat inspection topics). Simon More will chair the WG. The WG will have an important role in development of list of priority diseases on the base of analytical methods and in the interaction with the article 36 contractor. The Panel was informed of the publication of the call.

A model will be developed for the assessment of the relative importance for meat inspection within overall surveillance system in the frame of implications for animal health and welfare.

The Panel stressed the critical importance of cooperation and synergy with other EFSA Panels and Units. The participation of AHAW representatives at meetings with other Units (and vice-versa) was recommended.

## **9. OTHER ISSUES**

### **9.1. Presentation on the Animal Health Strategy**

On the second day of the AHAW plenary meeting, Alberto Laddomada, Head of the Sanco Unit D1 (Animal Health and Standing Committees) gave a presentation of the Animal Health Strategy (*prevention is better than cure*). The presentation was followed by a discussion with the Panel. Alberto Laddomada underlined the important role of the AHAW Panel in the field of animal health. The discussion focused on how this contribution comes into the implementation of the Animal Health Strategy.

### **9.2. Self-mandate of the Scientific Committee unit on research priorities**

In response to the invitation by the EFSA Task Force on research priorities for contributions on proposed research within EFSA's remit, and recognising the importance of the exercise, the AHAW Panel drafted a list of research priorities within its scientific areas. The draft was discussed during the meeting.

Three proposals were considered: a) disease control methods avoiding destruction of large numbers of animals and preserving welfare; b) integrated systems for animal health and welfare monitoring; c) Unified approaches to intensive and extensive farming systems. The



proposals will be forwarded to be included in a consolidated proposal from EFSA to DG Research.