

AHAW UNIT

Parma, 31 May 2011

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON AHAW

**Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network for
Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare
Parma, 2 and 3 May 2011**

Participants

Network representatives	Arvo Viltrop (EST), Edith Authie (FRA), Eva Renčová (CZE), Helen Roberts (UK), Simona Ianetti (IT), Olga Ondrasovicova (SVK), Nora Bakos (HU), Lina Hult (SWE), Taina Aaltonen (FIN), , Wim Ooms (NLD), Daphne Taminiaux (BE), Niall Ó Nualláin (IRL), Kristian Møller (DK), Franz Conraths (GER), Ingfrid Naess (NOR), Halldor Runolsson (ICE), Rudite Varna (LAT)
AHAW Panel members	Philippe Vannier (chair of the Panel), Donald Broom, Joerg Hartung, Linda Keeling, Simon More, David Morton, Toni Oltenacu, Moez Saana, Mike Sharp, Endre Szucs, Martin Wierup
Invited speakers	Howard Browman, Jeffrey Rushen
Observers	Marina Marini (DG Sanco, Unit 03), J. Krommer (DG Sanco, Unit D5), Lukas Perler (CH), Xavier Van Huffel (BE), Nadege Leboucq (OIE)
EFSA	AHAW Unit: Franck Berthe, Per Have, Ana Afonso, Andrea Gervelmeyer, Denise Candiani, Milen Georgiev, Oriol Ribo, Sandra Correia, Sofie Dhollander, Tomasz Grudnik Torben Nielson (AFSCO), Saadia Noorani (AFSCO), Elisa Aiassa (SAS)

2 May

1. Welcome and apologies, agenda

The meeting was chaired by Franck Berthe, head of the AHAW Unit.

The chair welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Carlo Dahm (LUX), Duncan Chetcuti (Malta), Fernando Almeida Bernardo (POR), Emilio García Muro (SPA), Ganado (MAL), Jacek Osek (POL), Josef Köfer (AUS), Pavlos Toumazos (CYP), Maarjia Kristian (EST), Mareks Samohvalovs (LAT), Stefan Nicolae (ROM), Simona Šalamon (SLO), Vidmantas Paulauskas (LTU), Paschalis Fortomaris (GRE), Georgi Georgiev (BUL).

The agenda was adopted.

2. Declarations of interest

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Declarations of Interests, EFSA encouraged participants to fill in the Annual Declaration of interest (ADoI). No conflicts of interests related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process or at the beginning of this meeting.

3. Discussions

3.1. Main conclusions and follow-up actions from previous meeting

Sandra Correia presented a summary of main conclusions from the previous meeting and the follow-up activities. This includes an increased exchange of information on activities carried out by the network Members. The electronic tools for discussion and information exchange were described. The presentation stressed the need for the network Members to create, develop and maintain good networking at national level. A first step towards this is active and efficient communication, including the use of the EFSA information exchange platform. The different levels of capacity in risk assessment among MS needs were also considered and it was agreed that the network would have a role in capacity building. AHAW will continue its efforts to foster cooperation within the network.

3.2. EFSA's networking with the Member States

Torben Nilsson (AFSCO) presented the EFSA strategy adopted by the Management Board in 2006 for networking and cooperation between with Member States. This strategy bears on the Advisory Forum (AF), EFSA Focal Points (FP), EFSA scientific networks, Member State consultations and Article 36 calls. The formal forum for communication and cooperation between EFSA and the Member States is the AF, chaired by the EFSA Executive Director. The EFSA FP are the operational links between EFSA, national food safety authorities, research institutes and national stakeholders. The aim of the networks is to support EFSA and the Member States in facilitating the development of a scientific cooperation framework through exchange of information, development and implementation of joint projects and exchange of expertise and best practices. These scientific networks refer to the AF of EFSA.

The network Members were informed that next Advisory Forum meeting (May 2011) will dedicate a session to AHAW questions.

The discussion covered several aspects related to participation to projects supported by EFSA, quality of and capacity of sharing data among the network. The state of play of the art 36 grant project on "Specifications of data collection on animal diseases to increase preparedness of the Panel to answer future mandates" was explained. The project has the deadline of April 2012. It was agreed that preliminary outcomes of this project will be presented at the next network meeting.

3.3. Information Exchange Platform (IEP)

Saadia Noorani (AFSCO) presented the structure, features and aims of the Information Exchange Platform (IEP). The IEP was developed for the exchanging and collecting scientific data and information. The IEP is an extranet site developed and managed by EFSA in cooperation with Member States to facilitate the exchange of risk assessment outputs undertaken by official bodies in the different MS. The National Focal Points collate and upload documents from their country. Users can view and download documents of interest. Monthly reports and notifications are also available. A demo of the structure and functionalities of the IEP was explained to the network.

The network Members confirmed their interest for the IEP; they also welcomed receiving monthly reports. They requested that EFSA reflect on authorization for them to upload of AHAW related documents into the IEP. The network members expressed interest in using the tool to share information on ongoing and future projects. EFSA will initiate a project with some member states to explore the feasibility of such activity.

3.4. Activities of network members

3.4.1. Finland

Taina Aaltonen (EVIRA) described the structure of the National Agency and presented some risk assessments recently conducted in Finland: FMD and emergency vaccination, ASF and risk of introduction to Finland, efficiency of surveillance systems for PRRS, AD and TGE in TGE in sows, Plans for future RA were presented: methods for rapid re-assessment of import risk of animal diseases, development of spread models to other production sectors, improvement of import risk analysis processes of diseases that are neighbouring countries to Finland, assessing the efficiency of official monitoring systems. The main challenges were identified and discussed.

3.4.2. Germany

Franz Conraths (FLI) described the RA activities in the field of AHAW at the FLI. The presentation also covered recently published RA: risk of introduction of exotic diseases, scientific opinions on BSE, Q-fever and AW on transport of animals. Current issues were also described: LPAI in wild water birds, ASF, import RA cattle pathogens. FLI is also involved with Epizone on the *Standardisation of import risk assessment*. Some problems usually faced were explained and discussed with the network. Suggestions for cooperation within this network were made: mutual information about planned or pending RA, data sharing, mutual information about completed RA (including methodologies) and discussion on harmonization of RA procedures.

3.4.3. Denmark

Kristian Møller (DTU National Veterinary Institute) presented the operational aspects of the RA produced by the Institute. Work has been developed on CSF, Aujeszky's Disease (serological surveillance), BSE (DTU-Vet national prognosis model for BSE cases and vector borne diseases (Can active surveillance for vector borne diseases be targeted specific areas and time periods within years (or specific years)? For the latter, a spatio-temporal transmission intensity model has been developed. Considering the uncertainty of the data, many parameters for transmission models and for modeling vector densities (e.g. vector competence) could be done in collaboration. Risk assessment for some vector borne diseases will be available at www.nordrisk.dk, for Bluetongue, Dirofilaria, Vivax malaria and African horse sickness. Focus is being given on foresight studies and development of models for early warning, and models that can predict the outcome of different intervention strategies, on dynamic and risk based surveillance programs and on the collaboration on input data and development/validation of models.

3.5. Retrospective analysis of risk assessments performed within the network

3.5.1. Methodology for analysis

Ana Afonso and Milen Georgiev presented a retrospective analysis exercise that was applied to risk assessments on the following issues: Q-fever and Echinococcus. The exercise actively involved participants from Sweden (Ann Lindberg and Susanna Sternberg), the Netherlands (Wim Ooms), Belgium (Xavier van Huffel), and a member of the AHAW Panel

(Simon More, Chair of the ad hoc working group on Q fever). The objectives of the review exercise were to: i) develop a methodology for comparative review of risk assessments performed by EFSA and National agencies, ii) identify areas and reasons for discrepancies in a impartial transparent way, and iii) provide recommendations to improve collaboration within the network.

3.5.2. Case studies: Q-fever, Echinococcus

The information extracted from different risk assessments performed by EFSA, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands was compiled and analysed. The main discrepancies among different assessments were presented and discussed. Time frame for work, objective of the assessment, methodology, geographical area of interest, semantics of the uncertainty in the expert statements, data availability and gaps, weight of the literature data, practicality in the recommendations, dialogue between risk assessors and risk managers, possible use of cost-benefits analysis were identified by the exercise and discussed during the meeting.

3.5.3. Conclusions and recommendations

Interestingly, the retrospective analysis could identify differences in risk questions, as well as in conclusions and recommendations. It is important that the reasons for such differences or eventual discrepancies be understood.

It was proposed to increase the availability of national opinions and risk assessments on the IEP. Language of publication was raised as a potential issue; efforts should be made so that a summary be available in English.

More attention should be placed on medium term planning of the work to be conducted by EFSA and in the Members States. This information should be shared within the network so that the retrospective analysis exercise can be turned into cooperation. More collaboration will be beneficial in identifying topics of common interest (e.g. methodology, specific expertise, collection of data, systematic reviews).

It was suggested that EFSA issue a report from this exercise that includes the details of the retrospective analysis. The report will be shared with the network.

3 May

4. Workshop on implementation of risk assessment for animal welfare

4.1. Presentation of the draft AHAW Guidance document on risk assessment for animal welfare

Linda Keeling gave a general introduction to animal welfare and recent developments on assessment of animal welfare. Oriol Ribó presented examples of EFSA risk assessments for animal welfare. The draft Guidance on risk assessment for animal welfare was presented by Moez Sanaa (chair of the ad hoc working group of the AHAW Panel). Participants were informed that a public consultation on the draft Guidance was launched on the EFSA website.

4.2. Case studies and group discussions

Two case studies were used to facilitate group discussions. A first case study asked to revise the quantitative risk assessment presented in appendix C of the draft Guidance comparing two management strategies: use of regular semen versus sexed semen. The second case study presented a situation of transport of fattening lambs from farm to slaughterhouse and it was asked to assess the risk linked to the increase of the density of animals plus the increase of the journey duration.

The group discussion focused on identifying which elements of the draft Guidance would be essential or not, considering whether the guidance would facilitate the dialogue between risk assessors and risk managers, and advantages or limitations of having a Guidance document when performing a risk assessment for animal welfare. The discussion also highlighted the need to link the Guidance with the systematic review methodology when making the literature review.

4.3. Invited presentations

Jeffrey Rushen (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada) gave a presentation on assessment of dairy cow welfare. The presentation stated the need of an accepted definition of animal welfare and the need for community standards to determine the acceptable level of welfare. The input versus outcome-based indicators and the need of standards to describe the welfare status of the animals was presented. The use of data bases to screen problematic farms, early warning systems to predict poor welfare and the need of behavioural welfare outcome indicators were also considered. The possibility to measure positive welfare was finally considered.

Howard Browman (Institute of Marine Research, Norway) gave a presentation on welfare science focusing on possible bias in welfare science by: 1) ignoring negative experimental results; 2) faith based–research by accepting ideas by faith and searching for data which may support these ideas; and 3) HARKing interpretation of the results (HARK: Hypothesis After Results are Known) instead of the hypothetic-deductive approach. Finally, the inflation of the science boundary by including, i.e. social, political or cultural considerations within the label “science”, was discussed.

Questions and discussion followed both presentations.

4.4. General discussion of the workshop

Overall, the network welcomed EFSA’s initiative to develop a Guidance for the implementation of risk assessment in the field of animal welfare.

It was agreed that, when finalized by EFSA, the Guidance would need to be used and tested at National level. It is expected that this will be a valuable source for feedback on the Guidance.

The discussion also pointed out the possible need for a handbook version of the Guidance.

5. Concluding remarks from both days

The main conclusions and recommendations of the meeting were:

1. It was agreed to organise a second meeting of the AHAW network in 2011:
 - a. The next meeting would focus on data in risk assessment: data needs, data specification, sharing and accessing data
 - b. Preliminary results from the art36 grant on “specification of data on Animal diseases to increase the preparedness of the AHAW Panel to answer future mandates” will be presented to the network at the next meeting
 2. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Advisory Forum will be an opportunity to present AHAW network activities and advocate:
 - a. The potential of the network for collaboration with Member States
 - b. The need to improve the sharing of annual work plans and medium-term planning among the Network
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- c. The need to address confidentiality issues
- 3. The retrospective analysis of risk assessments performed within the network was recognized as a valuable exercise for the network:
 - a. It was agreed to further develop and expand network capacity with that regard
 - b. It was also agreed that this type of activity will provide a solid foundation for future cooperation within the network
- 4. Recognizing the value of the IEP and its great potential, it was requested that:
 - a. EFSA evaluate possible expansion of access and upload rights
 - b. Members of the network upload their risk assessments, with English summary
 - c. Information flow be maintained within the network about availability of documents on the IEP

The Chair thanked all attendants for their participation.

The meeting was closed.
