European Food Safety Authority

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE UNIT

MINUTES OF THE 57th PLENARY MEETING OF THE PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

04-05 May 2011, Parma

1. PARTICIPANTS

AHAW PANEL MEMBERS

Anette Bøtner, Don Broom, Mariano Domingo (May 05), Jörg Hartung, Linda Keeling, Simon More, David Morton, Pascal Oltenacu, Fulvio Salati, Mo Salman, Moez Sanaa, Mike Sharp, Jan Arend Stegeman, Endre Szücs, Hans-Hermann Thulke, Philippe Vannier, J. Webster, and Martin Wierup.

AHAW UNIT

Scientific officers: Ana Afonso, Franck Berthe, Denise Candiani, Sandra Correia, Sofie Dhollander, Milen Georgiev, Andrea Gervelmeyer, Tomasz Grudnik, Per Have, and Oriol Ribó.

Administrative assistant: Elda Franchi.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (DG SANCO)

Marina Marini (Unit 03, Science and Stakeholders), Francisco Reviriego Gordejo and Sandra Mesman (Unit D1, Animal Health and Standing Committees – agenda item 5.1 by conference call), and Judit Krommer (Unit D5, Animal Welfare– agenda items 6.1, 6.6, and 6.7).

OBSERVERS

Nadège Leboucq (OIE sub-regional Representative, Brussels)

2. OPENING,APOLOGIES AND AGENDA

The Chairman announced that Dr. Isabel Minguez-Tudela past away. The Panel received the sad news with a lot of compassion. Isabel's death is a tremendous loss for the scientific community of animal health, for veterinary medicine, and for all of those who had the privilege to have known her and worked with her. She was admired for her great energy, strong personality and deep humanity. The Panel observed one minute of silence in memory of Dr. Isabel Minguez-Tudela.

The Chairman welcomed the Panel members and other attendants. He particularly welcomed Nadège Leboucq who will attend the plenary meetings as observer for the OIE. Apologies were received from Marcus Doherr, Frank Koenen, and Albert Osterhaus.

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 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 56th plenary meeting of the AHAW Panel were unanimously adopted by written procedure and published on the EFSA web (http://www.efsa.europa.eu).

5. DRAFT OPINIONS SUBMITTED FOR ADOPTION

5.1. Bluetongue (EFSA-Q-2010-01238 and EFSA-Q-2010-01237)

On 27 October 2010, EFSA received a request from the European Commission for a scientific opinion on bluetongue, addressing two issues: 1) the possible additional risk posed by bluetongue serotype 8 compared to other serotypes; and 2) epidemiological parameters, such as the expected prevalence under different circumstances and the size of a geographical relevant area for the purpose of monitoring and surveillance programmes. EFSA accepted the mandate and proposed to deliver two separate opinions. Outcomes of these opinions may be considered when preparing proposals for amendments to EC Regulation 1266/2007.

The draft scientific opinions were presented to the Panel for discussion in March; they were submitted for possible adoption in May 2011.

Bluetongue serotype 8

To answer the first part of the question, a systematic literature review (SLR) has been carried out to evaluate if the kinetics of BTV-8 infections and virulence are different from the other serotypes. For the second part of the question, a SLR focussed on trans-placental transmission and transmission through artificial insemination and embryo transfer of BTV 8 and other BTV serotypes. The conclusions forthcoming from the SLR were used to assess the impact of the potential higher risks for BTV-8 for transplacental transmission and transmission through artificial insemination on the BTV epidemiology as well as the effectiveness, suitability and proportionality of risk mitigating measures.

The Panel discussed the draft opinion. Only minor amendments were made. The opinion was adopted on May 4.

Bluetongue monitoring and surveillance

The panel discussed the draft opinion. Following discussions with the Commission, it was suggested to expand the conclusions and include rationale provided in the text of the opinion. it was decided to submit the document for written adoption. The document was adopted on May 16, with 20 votes for adoption of the 20 panel members who voted.

6. DRAFT OPINIONS SUBMITTED FOR DISCUSSION

6.1. Public health hazards to be covered by meat inspection (domestic swine, EFSA-Q-2010-00930)

The Commission requested EFSA to deliver 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 meat inspection in a public health context; however it is specifically requested that any change suggested to current inspection methods should not jeopardize the capacity to detect certain animal diseases nor compliance with 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 AHAW Panel will ensure that any change to current inspection does not jeopardize the capacity to detect animal diseases nor compliance with the animal welfare regulation. For this purpose, the Panel considered needed to determine the importance and integration of meat inspection in the EU animal health surveillance and monitoring.

This mandate is addressed in collaboration with several other EFSA Units. An overarching was formed to ensure coordination of contributions from all participants.

The AHAW Panel WG is formed of Panel members. The approach is to identify a list of diseases/conditions of interest, a subset of which will be chosen for further modelling, based on agreed criteria. The work is ongoing and organised in the 3 main steps:

Step1: Defining diseases/conditions of interest

Step 2: Modelling the impact of proposed changes to the current meat inspection system

Step 3: Modelling the impact of proposed changes to the current meat inspection system on the overall monitoring and surveillance system

The draft document (meat inspection of swine) was submitted to the Panel for discussion.

The panel expressed the view that considerations of the practicality for implementation of the proposed changes (e.g. ante-mortem at farm instead of in the abattoir) should be taken into account in the qualitative assessment of recommended changes in meat inspection The purpose of the inspection at different places if changed and potential consequences in positive and negative aspects should be presented. Specificity of the inspection per species and systems was underlined. The methods and results of the quantitative assessment were thoroughly discussed. Results from modelling suggest that there is very limited impact of the proposed changes in meat inspection on the probability of case detection at individual animal level. However, there are several points to be considered: i)input variables; ii)the focus only on subset of all infected animals; iii)high detection probability does not directly infer that cases will be notified. In the discussion was specified that meat inspection has not capacity to replace early detection of infection at farm level. The Panel proposed improvements in the presentation of modelling results or to cancel quantitative assessment.

It was suggested that sensitivity analysis se of detection probabilities, analysis of detection points importance and which stages are more affected by changes could be applied.

6.2. Hatchery waste as animal by-products (EFSA-Q-2011-00077)

In November 2010, the European Commission requested a scientific opinion concerning changes of categorisation of particular animal-by-products from Category 2 to Category 3 (Ref. Ares (2010)860477 - 25/11/2010). Subsequently, the EC clarified that focus should be given to the "*risk posed by the possible use of dead-in-shell chickens for the production of petfood under the provisions currently applicable for processed petfood*." The mandate deadline is 31 July 2011.

The WG dealing with this mandate drafted a text with the possible hazards present in these products, while the BIOHAZ Panel Working Group evaluated the eventual inactivation of the identified hazards through the two different processing methods. The draft chapter with the possible hazards was presented to the Panel and discussed. Small amendments were included and the adoption is foreseen for the next plenary in June. The Panel agreed that the draft chapter be shared with the BIOHAZ Panel WG to be presented at their next Panel plenary.

7. PROGRESS REPORTS AND DISCUSSION OF CURRENT MANDATES

7.1. Use of animal-based measures to assess the welfare of dairy cows (EFSA-Q-2010-00941)

The mandate requests to: 1) 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; 2) identify how the Welfare Quality assessment protocols cover the main hazards identified in EFSA scientific opinions (and vice-versa); 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 current deadline of the Mandate is June 2011. The chair of the WG informed the Panel that a new possible deadline was discussed with the Commission. It is proposed that the opinion be delivered at the end of 2011 on the following background: the request for scientific opinions on the use of animal-based measures to assess animal welfare constitutes a new type of question to the AHAW Panel. It is also the first request in a series that is planned to address all major farmed species by the end of 2012. Therefore, in accordance with the EFSA policy on public consultation, the draft scientific opinion could be subjected to public consultation to ensure its completeness, clarity and advise future opinions in this area. The proposed extension of the deadline would also contribute to consistency with the following mandate on pigs, due for December 31, 2011.

The draft scientific opinion will be presented to the AHAW Panel at its June plenary meeting for approval prior to public consultation. The intention is to open the public consultation early September for a six week period.

7.2. Guidance for Risk Assessment on Animal Welfare (EFSA-Q-2007-168)

EFSA launched a self-mandate in 2007, revised in 2009, 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 draft guidance was presented during the second meeting of the EFSA Network for Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare in a workshop session on May 3. The draft guidance received very good feedback from the network members. It is now open for A public consultation[1] on the draft guidance was launched on May 4 and will be open for a 6-week period until June 17.

It is expected that the Guidance will be adopted in October 2011.

7.3. Guidance on health and welfare aspects of GM-Animals (EFSA-Q-2010-698)

In March 2010, the European Commission requested a guidance on animal health and welfare aspects of GM animals in addition to those on safety assessment of GM animal-derived food and feed. The agreed deadline is end of 2011.

The guidance is developed in close cooperation with the GMO Panel and its guidance on the safety assessment of genetically modified animal-derived food and feed. The two guidance documents will be merged into a single, comprehensive document.

The Panel agreed that the proposal to assess health and welfare in a 4-step process, starting from initial development at the laboratory level and ending with post-marketing monitoring and reporting constitute an appropriate framework to address the topic. One of the major questions concern the feasibility of using a non-GM counterpart as a reference for the assessment and it was pointed out that in many situations such a reference may not be available or sufficiently relevant. In such cases there will be a need to perform an assessment following available guidelines and established procedures.

[1] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/consultations/call/ahaw110504.htm

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 scheduled to take place from June 2011 for a period of eight weeks.

The draft document will be submitted to the Panel at the June plenary meeting for endorsement prior to the public consultation.

7.4. Other mandates

Progress report on other ongoing mandates of the AHAW Panel was provided to Panel members with the briefing notes of the meeting.

8. OTHER ISSUES

8.1. Dates of plenary meetings in 2012

The following dates were agreed for Panel plenary meetings in 2012: February 9-10, March 14-15, April 19-20, May 23-24, and June 21-22.

8.2. Miscellaneous

Following a short discussion on the role of wildlife and the wildlife/domestic livestock interface in the epidemiology and control options for bovine tuberculosis, it was agreed that this area was a suitable subject for a mandate. The issue was discussed with the Commission in the past on the basis of an external report (art. 36) published 20 October 2009. It was agreed that self-tasking could be an option since the Commission has not responded to earlier requests.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of anthelmintic resistance, an area that needs to be addressed by EFSA. Since the advent of modern anthelmintic in the 1960's it has been the widespread perception that helminths (parasitic worms) can be controlled by using these drugs. However, over-reliance and misuse of anthelminthics has in many cases resulted in increasing levels of anthelmintic resistance (AR) on a worldwide level in a range of endoparasites, especially in nematodes of sheep, goats and horses. More recently there is also emerging levels in gastrointestinal nematodes of cattle and possibly also in poultry. Although, it appears still be on a rather low level in Europe the mere presence of such AR is a timely warning sign as with increasing movements of animals between farms and countries the problem may become even more widespread. Attention has been paid on AR within recent EU projects (e.g. PARASOL and DELIVER); there is however a need for more far-reaching targeted interventions to understand how best to deal with this problem.