

DELIVERABLE

REPORT ON THE FOURTH ANNUAL REFLECTION BOARD (RB) MEETING

The fourth Reflection Board (RB) meeting between representatives of RB organisations (from the EU Platform on Animal Welfare) and the EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare of Poultry and other small farmed animals (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA), with the participation of DG-SANTE as observer, was held remotely via Teams in the afternoon 22th of October 2024. This meeting was the occasion to present the activities carried out and outcomes achieved by the Centre since the last meeting, the new Work Programme proposal of the Centre for the next 3 years, and to get their feedback and exchange, discuss and identify possible future collaborations and interests.

Participants

In total 10 participants, five of them from the seven EU platform entities forming the RB (one participant represented two entities), two from DG SANTE, and three from EURCAW-Poultry-SFA, were connected.

The reflection board is composed of Association/institutions/entities member of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare:

1. Eurogroup for Animals
2. Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU (a.v.e.c.)
3. European Rural Poultry Association (ERPA)
4. European agri-cooperatives (COCEGA)
5. European farmers (COPA)
6. European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders (EFFAB)
7. Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)

Meeting agenda:

14:00	14:05	Welcome (V. Michel)
14:05	14:10	Welcome (DG SANTE, K. Vornhagen)
14:10	15:10	Update on the Centre's actual work (activity 1, 2 and 3) (V. Michel, A. Velarde, E. Nehlig) including 10 min break + Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q2Es + Catching of turkeys in a loose house • Factsheets: Injurious pecking in turkeys, on-farm FPD in turkeys, plumage damage and emaciation at SLH in LH • Scientific study on assessment of litter quality • Scientific study Rabbits SLH • Best practices
15:15	15:30	Presentation of main topics of the next work programme proposal (A. Velarde, V. Michel, E. Nehlig) + Discussion Boiler, LH, turkeys, rabbits, Slaughter and killing, training, Communication and dissemination
16:00	16:55	Open discussion
15:55	16:00	Closure (V. Michel)

The meeting started at 14:05. Virginie Michel, Coordinator of the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA, welcomed the participants and introduced the agenda.

Virginie Michel presented the aim and activities of the Centre. The Centre aims at supporting the Competent Authorities and DG SANTE in improving the enforcement of the legislation on animal welfare. In particular, by providing scientific and technical expertise, carrying out studies and developing methods for improving and assessing the welfare level of animals. The Centre has five core activities:

- ✓ Coordinated assistance - Central contact point for Competent Authorities, networking and prioritising effort.
- ✓ Animal welfare indicators – indicators and methods for assessment and improvement.
- ✓ Scientific and technical studies – Provision of knowledge on priority areas and demonstration of good practices.
- ✓ Training courses - evaluation of training needs and develop standards for effective training.
- ✓ Dissemination of research findings and innovations

Priority areas for EURCAW-Poultry-SFA: Welfare of

1. Broiler chickens on farm
2. Laying hens in alternative housing systems
3. Stunning and killing
4. Rabbits on farm, with a focus on alternative housing systems
5. Turkeys on farm and during transport

Virginie Michel briefly reminded the composition and the role of the RB

Question (Q): Can you provide some examples of what can be decided by the RB? It's Both way exchange, a lot of information the centre is providing to the RB.

Answer (A): It's not a direct input on our Work Programme or outputs, but keeping us updated on what you do, what's happening in the field. The Centre will send the minutes of the 2023 meeting to the new RB participant.

Kirsten Vornhagen (DG SANTE G5) welcomed everybody. She wished all participants a good and fruitful meeting.

The activities of the Centre were presented, with a focus on what was achieved since last year meeting.

- **Update on the Centre's actual work (activity 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)** (V. Michel, A. Velarde, E. Nehlig) + **discussion** (PDF presentation slides 13-74)

Were presented:

Update on the Centre's actual work (activity 1) (E. Nehlig, A. Velarde)

Where to find Q2Es and the answer to query [Q2E-EURCAW-Poultry-SFA-2023-010](#) Catching of turkeys in a loose house

No Issues were discussed

Update on the Centre's actual work (activity 2 and 3) (V. Michel, A. Velarde)

Injurious pecking in turkeys factsheet

No Issues were discussed

On-farm FPD in turkeys

No Issues were discussed

Plumage damage and emaciation at SLH in LH

No Issues were discussed

Scientific study on assessment of litter quality

Issues discussed:

- Q: Do you have any overview on how much your factsheets are actually used? It would be really nice to know if the inspectors use them.
A: Yes and No. When we ask the Member States (MSs), they say they use it, and they are interested in having them in different languages. But it's difficult to monitor the actual use.
- Reflection (R): An idea of how to disseminate your factsheets further would be to ask inspectors to provide feedback on how to diffuse effectively the content to them. You could maybe use the FVE to diffuse through national veterinarian associations this information to members.
A: The past strategy conducted by the Centre was explained (email presentation of the Centre in English that was sent to all EU MSs asking to translate it and send it to their inspectors). This is an interesting proposition. We keep in touch.
Also, the main difficulty is also the languages, we have a limitation. It's a challenge to translate all the factsheets in all the EU official languages. If you have any idea on how to do this, please let us know. Associations interested in translating are also very welcome.
- Q: Do you have any information about the correlation between humidity and the emission of ammonia?
A: There is published data showing this. In this study we just did the correlation between the humidity and the litter quality.
- Q: Some analysis of the current literature about how to treat the litter refers to the use of the emission of ammonia to monitor it. How to adjust the indicators in the farm, to improve the soil, according to the best practices?
A: This could be a thematic factsheet for the future: how to maintain the litter? We could provide all the key parameters, like additives, ventilation ...

Scientific study Rabbits SLH

Issues discussed:

- Remark in the chat: I think there should be a representative from the European Rabbit Association on this board: <https://www.european-rabbit-association.eu/>, ERA - European Rabbit Association. It's quite a new association. It's time for them to have a seat as well.
A in the chat: The "seats" to this reflection board - as for those of the other EURCAWs - were designated on the basis of the Platform "seats". There is no automatic participation of each association. But I agree that for this centre a rabbit association would certainly be relevant.
A: The Centre will consider this.
- Q: Do you have any correlation between the practical animal welfare indicators you use and the quality of the final product (meat)?

A: The meat quality assessment is not part of the Centre's work. In comparison to other species, it has been proven in the literature for other species that improving the stun-to-stick interval will improve meat quality.

Best practices

No Issues were discussed

- R: We can organize a survey in order to collect best practices and send the results to you to analyze.
- R: It's very important when you make this survey to have it "more realistic". If it's not taking the whole picture (is it economically viable?) it will be difficult to get answers.
- Q: Would an example of a transport company transporting day old chicks be of interest for the Centre? If you want something from a company like that, we will be more than welcome to share this.
A: Yes, please send the information to the Centre.
- Q: Would case studies be interesting? Would it be worth sharing that?
A: Yes, please send the information to the Centre.

Update on the Centre's actual work (activity 4) (A. Velarde)

No Issues were discussed

Update on the Centre's actual work (activity 5) (E. Nehlig)

No Issues were discussed

- Q: If animal welfare is connected to animal health, is animal welfare the first step of animal health? Or, is it just an ethical issue? Is it possible to consider animal welfare as part of animal health?
A: There is a clear link, and that was demonstrated. Good health is not a guarantee of good welfare. Bad welfare is definitely connected to bad health. Four pillars' rule: nutrition, comfort, health and behaviour.
Reference posted in the chat: *Mellor DJ, Beausoleil NJ, Littlewood KE, McLean AN, McGreevy PD, Jones B, Wilkins C. The 2020 Five Domains Model: Including Human-Animal Interactions in Assessments of Animal Welfare. Animals (Basel). 2020 Oct 14;10(10):1870. doi: 10.3390/ani10101870. PMID: 33066335; PMCID: PMC7602120.*
- R: 5 domains is predominant now: <https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/library/stop-cruel-imports-applying-eu-animal-welfare-standards-all-products-placed-eu-market>.

- **Presentation of main topics of the next work programme proposal** (A. Velarde, V. Michel, E. Nehlig) + **Discussion** (PDF presentation slides 75-91)

Broiler

No Issues were discussed

Laying hens

No Issues were discussed

Turkeys

No Issues were discussed

Slaughter and killing

No Issues were discussed

Rabbits

No Issues were discussed

Training

No Issues were discussed

Disseminating research and innovations

No Issues were discussed

- R: EURCAW-Poultry-SFA would be a great body providing a protocol to assess growing breeds and guide MSs on what constitutes of a high welfare breed. Is there any room for including this in the next Work Programme?
- DG SANTE: Do you mean EURCAW to define some criteria on what would be best to consider in the genotype from an animal welfare point of view? That can be included, but other planned topics should have to be removed. We support this, but it's under discussion.

The roadshow initiative for the next period was explained. This corresponds to visits that can be organised by the Centre in the EU MSs, at field level, and discuss the specific topics of the visited countries (visit each country separately). The Centre can take the opportunity to discuss with national stakeholders in a separate meeting.

- Q: How to place this with BTSF? Roadshows are a good idea. Please, also invite the stakeholders.
DG SANTE: Roadshows are planned on a bilateral basis between EURCAW and the targeted MS. The visits are tailored for each MS. It's not foreseen to be training. The aim is to have discussions with local inspectors and Competent Authorities. The Centre can see if farm visits or other types of visits could be included. In a separate way, the Centre could have a meeting with national stakeholders to have the possibility to hear their views. For the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA, 3 visit of MS per year, 1 physical and 2 online meetings, are planned.
- R: Please also invite RB members in each country, as we have representatives.
- DG SANTE: NGOs could also be invited and hear their specific voices, at the national level, to get the specific views of what is going on in that MSs. The EURCAWs are foreseen to support EU MSs in the application of the legislation. The questions addressed to the Centre should always be about the implementation, not the interpretation of legislation.
- Q: What do you do with the MSs that do not answer? It's maybe more of a question for DG SANTE.
A: The Centre is sending reminders. The rate of answers depends on the topics.
- R: Countries that are not answering the surveys, are generally the countries where there are the most difficulties to communicate with. It's a general problem. The Centre cannot do more than sending the reminders. It's an EU problem.

DG SANTE: That's not the task of an EURCAW to say to MSs what they have to do, and there is no way to oblige a MS to reply to a survey. EURCAWs to support the MSs in implementing the legislation and all the background work.

➤ Open discussion

- Q: Does the Centre have any contact on animal welfare with countries outside the EU?
A: We have contact with EFTA countries. They follow our meetings. Apart from this, not really. It's not in our remit.
- R: We understand and we respect that. The level of animal welfare for the importation from Brazil, Thailand and Ukraine is raising questioning. It would be interesting for us to take a look at the animal welfare in those countries.
- R: Same standards for imports are lower than from the EU. Will EFSA produce a scientific opinion on this?
- DG SANTE: In the end, it's the EU Commission who adopts new legislation.

A discussion on the EFSA reports about poultry welfare took place.

➤ Wrap-up

Virginie Michel highlighted that the Centre is looking for information regarding animal welfare Good Practices, exchanges about case studies, roadshows (stakeholders at the national level to meet), and will try to include a new member to RB.

RB members should feel free to contact the Centre per email about these topics.

➤ Closure of the meeting

The meeting was closed at 16:40