



Introduction

This deliverable is part of the sub-activity 1.1: Network building.

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Article 96 (a): Providing scientific and technical expertise within the scope of their mission including, where appropriate in the form of coordinated assistance, to relevant national support networks and bodies in the area governed by the rules on the welfare requirements for animals.

Objectives: The objective of this sub-activity is to consolidate and enhance networking through competent authorities (CAs) of the EU Member States (MSs) and continue building strong collaboration with National Reference Centres (NRCs), supporting bodies (SBs) and other welfare networks. Furthermore, the Centre will seek information and exchange knowledge with the reflection board (RB) network.

Concretely, the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA has during the period:

- 1) Consolidated the network with CAs.
- 2) Consolidated the network with NRCs and SBs
- 3) Consolidated the network with the RB.
- 4) Continued to collaborate with existing welfare networks (e.g., WG9 Poultry welfare and management of WPSA).

e-annual RB for animal welfare meeting 2025

The fifth Reflection Board meeting between representatives of RB organisations 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 16th of January 2026. This meeting was the occasion to present the activities carried out and outcomes achieved by the Centre since the last meeting, the current Work Programme of the Centre, and to get their feedback and exchange, discuss and identify possible future collaborations and interests.

Participants

In total 16 participants, eight of them from the eight EU platform entities forming the RB (one participant represented two entities, and one entity had two participants), two from DG SANTE, and six 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)
8. European Rabbit Association (ERA)

Meeting agenda:



- 13:00 13:05 Welcome (*V. Michel*)
- 13:05 13:10 Welcome (*DG SANTE*)
- 13:10 13:45 Short presentation of EURCAW-Poultry-SFA and its Reflection Board (*members introduction including a presentation of Mr. Juan José Pascual Amorós (ERA), RB objectives and tasks*)
- 13:45 15:05 Update on the Centre's actual work + Discussion (*EURCAW-Poultry-SFA*)
- 15:05 15:35 The importance of stocking density and breed as animal welfare indicators for broilers (*H. Lambert, Eurogroup four animal*)
- 15:35 15:55 Open discussion
- 15:55 16:00 Closure (*V. Michel*)

Meeting summary

The meeting started at 13:08. Antonio Velarde, deputy-Coordinator of the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA, welcomed the participants and introduced the agenda.

Laerke Toft Holmes and Ester Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE G5) welcomed everybody, highlighted that those meetings are important, wished participants a good and fruitful meeting.

Antonio Velarde presented the EURCAWs, 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 Centres has five core activities:

- Coordinated assistance.
- Animal welfare indicators, methods for the assessment and methods of improvement.
- Scientific and technical studies.
- Training courses.
- 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. Consciousness and welfare during stunning and killing process at slaughter and on farm
4. Rabbits on farm, with a focus on alternative housing systems
5. Turkeys on farm

Antonio Velarde briefly reminded the composition and the role of the RB before RB members introduced themselves. It was the first RB meeting participation for ERA. Welcome ERA.

Introduction of Juan José Pascual Amorós, and ERA (slides 14-21)

Juan José Pascual Amorós, Director of the Institute for Animal Science and Technology at Universitat Politècnica de València, presented himself and ERA.

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA was designated by the European Union on 4 October 2019 through Regulation (EU) 2019/1685, in accordance with Articles 95 and 96 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625.



No Issues were discussed

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

Q2E short list (slide 23)

No Issues were discussed

Guidance for the selection of the most appropriate depopulation method in terms of animal welfare in the event of Avian Influenza (slides 24-33)

Online tool: <https://poultree.cnr-bea.fr/>

Issues discussed:

- Question (Q): Any indication of how much this tool has been used?
- Answer (A): The tool is online since the end of 2025. It has not been used a lot so far. EURCAW-Poultry-SFA made a factsheet on how to assess welfare and we sent to CA for feedback but did not receive many concrete ones. HPAI is an emergency and maybe they less focus on the welfare. The centre will try again to reach out to the member states for feedback.
- Remark (R): Cost effectiveness needs to be considered. Sometimes the priority is just on minimising the animal health emergency.
- A: Some CAs want some time after the outbreak to think about it and reflect on ways to improve the process. Some EURCAW members will also try to use it in the field this year. Member states need to get used to it when it is not an emergency period.
- Q: There is huge potential in this tool. Would it be possible to re-run the webinar for regional competent authorities, as they might be valuable to promote the tool further? Ventilation shut down is not mentioned in the tool which is really encouraging.
- A: The webinar was well attended but reaching more people is always welcome. Re running the webinar should be doable, not the workshop portion. The webinar part was recorded and is available online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPx5ChdejZY>

Fitness For Transport (slides 34-41)

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA ask the RB members some questions:

- Do you think is relevant?
- Do you have prevalence about animals not fit for transport?
- Do you have information about how the fitness assessment is done on the field? And who is doing the assessment?
- Are you aware of any guidance about the assessment of FFT?
- Do you miss any indicator?

Issues discussed:

- R: The relevance of the questions asked and the animal transport guide on poultry were discussed.
- R: As there is no representative from the laying hen sector, it was proposed to add EUWEP as new potential RB member.
- Q: is there an assessment of the guidelines before recommendation to vets in the field?
- A: EURCAW-Poultry-SFA cannot interpret the legislation, and cannot say what if animals are fit for transport or not. The Centre provides the resources, (the guidance), then will provide the relative training, and then we can



ask CAs for feedback of the guidance use in the following years. Next topic could be FFT rabbits maybe if it's relevant for MSs and the EU Commission.

Guidance stunning equipment (slides 42-46)

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA ask the RB members some questions:

- Do you think is relevant?
- Are you aware of any guidance on the topic?

Issues discussed:

- Q: have you been in contact with the manufacturers of the stunning equipment?
- A: yes, the Centre has been in contact for different equipment and their specifications. This request has arisen from a national request. Different systems and manufacturers were identified.
- Q: it's important that manufacturers get feedback on what is working properly and what is not.
- A: once the guidance will be ready, the CA will get a checklist to consider.
- Q: have you considered key parameters beyond legislation?
- A: The starting point is the legislation but the Centre has considered how characteristics of species need to be considered and inform whether the parameters are appropriate or not. The goal is not to add parameters that are not in legislation.

Consciousness Ducks in collaboration with EUPAHW (slides 47-53)

No Issues were discussed

Rabbits on farm: gnawing material (slides 54-61)

<https://zenodo.org/records/18259438>

- Q: This activity is very nice; enrichment is very important to take into account. How those materials can affect the transmission of illness?
- A: recommendations were provided on cleanliness of the enrichment's material

Good practices (slides 62-63)

Do you have examples of good practices that you would like to promote? No advertisement of company.

Good practices proposals: no

- Q: Are you in contact with BroilerNet
- A: Yes

Dissemination & Communication: Knowledge Pill, Newsletter, 2 Q2Es Infographics, translations, LinkedIn account (slides 64-67)

Issues discussed:

- Q: How are you getting this out to people? The Knowledge pill was only watched 109 times.
- A: The information is communicated to EU member state CA official contact points and the diffusion to field inspectors may not be effectively done. The centre can also try going through the RB partners too.
- R: A trigger and additional knowledge or emails to get notification to share this would be needed to be able to share the output with other veterinarians and state veterinary association.

Policy Indicators for Broiler Welfare: The roles of stocking density and breed (H. Lambert, EUROGROUP for animal) (slides 68 -90)



Issues discussed:

- Points of view were exchange about the impact of breed and stocking densities on welfare and health.
- The animal welfare indicators survey struggles from some RB members

Open discussion

- Q: Have you received any questions on fur animals?
- A: Not for a long time (2020).

Wrap-up

Virginie Michel highlighted that the Centre is looking for information regarding animal welfare Good Practices, exchanges about case studies. RB members should feel free to contact the Centre per email about these topics. The Centre could duplicate the 2025 avian influenza webinar if we have a target audience. She also asked if the RB members have enough access to EURCAW-Poultry-SFA's production and outcomes, or have any specific needs, requirement.

Issue discussed:

- The organisation of the roadshows.

Ester Alaez-Pons thanked everyone for the participation and rich discussions. These meeting is very interesting and very dynamic.

Closure

The meeting was closed at 15:55