

Introduction

The sixth EU-network meeting between representatives of Competent Authorities (CAs) and the EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare of Poultry and other small farmed animals (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA), took place physically at Anses headquarters in Maisons-Alfort, France on October 2025, 01-02, during 2*0.5 days. This meeting was the occasion to present the Centre's work performed since the last meeting in 2024. Furthermore, it permitted participants to discuss and exchange good practices and the main needs and expectations of CAs.

During and after the meeting the 'Chatham House rule' applies.

Participants

In total 35 participants, from 17 EU Member States (MSs) participated, including 22 delegates from EU MSs CAs, one from DG SANTE, 1 EFSA representative, 2 EFTA representatives and 9 from EURCAW-Poultry-SFA.

Meeting agenda

01/10/25

- 12:30 Registration of the participants
- 13:00 Welcome and Introduction: V. Michel, E. Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE), G. Salvat (Anses)
- 13:25 What's new in EURCAW-Poultry-SFA's work
- 13:40 Let's talk about Roadshows!
Feedback on the Italian Roadshow of last summer (A. Ferraro, IT)
- 14:10 Icebreaker activity
- 14:40 *Coffee and tea break*
- 15:00 Introduction of the World Café topics
- 15h15 World Café: 4 tables
 - Table 1: Common Database on Welfare
 - Table 2: Animal based indicators are everywhere
 - Table 3: Roadshows
 - Table 4: Genetic related welfare issues
- 17:00 Closure & *PHOTO*

Evening Visit (17:00) and Dinner (19:30)

02/10/25

- 9:00 World Café Wrap-up
- 9:20 2025-2027 EURCAW-Poultry-SFA Work Programme highlights:
 - Fitness for Transport in laying hen (A. Velarde, EURCAW-Poultry-SFA)
 - Study on consciousness assessment in ducks' slaughterhouse (A. Varvaro Porter –EURCAW-Poultry-SFA)

- 09:50 Plenary session:
- 1) Avian Influenza decision tree (L. Kremer, EURCAW-Poultry-SFA, FNRCW)
 - 2) Welfare of rabbit on French farm (F. Depersin, FR)
 - 3) How did an NGO's enforcement request lead to better practical policy for welfare control at the slaughterhouse (J. Marques-Hermann, NL)
 - 4) Challenges in assessing what constitutes an acceptable level of pre-stun shocks in waterbath stunning (M. Cederwall)
 - 5) Stunning Problems in Long-Winged Species, AW indicators in organic broilers and geese reared for foie-gras production (M. Camiña Montero, ES)
- 11:30 *Eat and meet session*
Each country explores the proposed topics to be covered which were not discussed before
- 12:45 Conclusion and Closure
- 13:00 End of the meeting

Summary of the meeting

Day 1

Session 13:00-13:25 welcome and Introduction (slide 1 to 11)

Virginie Michel (EURCAW-poultry-SFA) welcomed the participants and presented the agenda.

Esther Alaez-Pons (DG SANTE) welcomed everybody and explained that EURCAWs are playing a crucial role in supporting the EU Commission, CAs and Supporting Bodies across Europe. EURCAW-Poultry-SFA supports the Member States by providing scientific and technical knowledge. She advertised the good practices work and emphasized that the Roadshows will permit an increase in networking. She highlighted an important service: the Question to EURCAW (Q2E), as it's very helpful, tailor-supported to assist MSs in their daily work. This meeting is an important opportunity to share good practices among MSs and a good opportunity to network. She wished everybody a good meeting.

Gilles Salvat (ANSES) welcomed the participants to ANSES for the sixth EU network meeting and for the first meeting to be held at ANSES. He explained that ANSES is heavily involved in animal welfare science through its reference and research activities, and Virginie Michel is the lead scientist in this area, coordinating research and reference activities, which are mainly dedicated to poultry, pig, and goat welfare. Coordinating this EURCAW together with the colleagues from Spain, Denmark, and Italy is of great importance to Anses and its scientific strategy from science to policy, and they hope that their modest yet effective scientific work will contribute positively to the inclusion and improvement of animal welfare in EU regulations and their French implementation. EURCAW has achieved a great deal over the past six years, but there is still much to be done. Feedback from the EU Commission's evaluation of the Center is positive. Thanks to the support of the MSs. Due to that, EURCAW-Poultry-SFA has been renewed. He wished the participants a fruitful meeting.

13:25 – 13:40 What's new in EURCAW-Poultry-SFA's work (slide 12 to 23)

Virginie Michel (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) introduced the EURCAWs, the team, and the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA's five priority areas and five activities. QR codes were provided to the participants to get online access to all the deliverables since the last meeting. The Q2E system was detailed. Broiler, laying hens, turkey, rabbit, good practices, and slaughter and killing activities' outputs were briefly presented. The EURCAW-Poultry-SFA newsletter and LinkedIn account were also highlighted, and the subscription to the newsletter was promoted.

No question from the audience.



Picture 1: Q2E system presentation by V.Michel.

13:40 – 14:10 Let's talk about Roadshows! Feedback on the Italian Roadshow of last summer (slide 24 to 57)

Leonardo Vinco (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) presented the objectives and the program of the first Roadshow in Italy (July 2025). 22 official veterinarians working in slaughterhouses have participated. They focused on Animal Based indicators (ABIs) collected in slaughterhouses. He also presented the EUPAHW with SOA9 and the common work done. Antonio Ferraro (CA Italy) presented how ABIs are collected at slaughter (CDMR, DOA, animal conditions, total rejections, and FPD) in Italy and the thresholds of each ABI. After that there was an exchange on the FPD scoring protocol, followed by an evaluation via an online platform (22 participants and 90 images). The key measures to improve the evaluation system are standardized procedures, reduced subjectivity, providing support tools, targeted training, and critical review. At the end of the session, some points were raised by the participants: CMR and first week mortality; DOA can be an ABI of welfare on-farm but also about transport; interfacing with farm veterinarians is very important; and cage density standards should be reviewed. The satisfaction survey was in general very good. It was useful to exchange the information and improve their ability to assess FPD. And all the objectives of the roadshow were completed.

No question from the audience.

Icebreaker activity

Two icebreaker activities were proposed. One entitled "Where do you come from" permitted people to discover each other according to the location of their country of origin. The second one was a "funny quiz". Participants had to form groups (and name them as they wished) and answer some questions related to poultry and small farmed animals.



Picture 2: Icebreaker activity: "Where do you come from".

15:00-15:15 Introduction to world café (slide 61 to 69)

Antonio Velarde (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) explained the methodology and the 4 topics: Table 1: Common Database on Welfare, Table 2: Animal Based indicators are Everywhere, Table 3: Roadshows, and Table 4: Genetic Related Welfare Issues.

The common database on welfare of the EUPAHW (SOA09) was explained. The objective is to produce a platform for animal welfare knowledge. Participants were asked if they have a database that can be shared. If it could be used for surveillance/monitoring? What are the possible concerns? And if there is a need for standardization.

No question from the audience.

After the 4th World café round, the participants had the opportunity to visit the Fragonard Museum before attending the joint dinner in Maisons-Alfort.

Day 2

09:00 to 09:20 World Café Wrap-up (slide 70 to 77)

Table 1. Antonio Velarde (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) explained the benefits (early detection of welfare consequences, benchmarking, identification with risk factors, and feedback to the farmers) and the possible concerns (used for prosecutions and/or penalties) of having a common database on welfare. The need for standardization was highlighted in methodology, scoring, and thresholds, as well as calibration and automation.

No question from the audience.

Table 2. Aranzazu Varvaro Porter (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) presented the main conclusion about the use of ABMs. There is a need to develop assessments that are not too time consuming. A country had questions about catching matters and wanted some feedback from other MSs. MSs value both ABI and RBI. In another country, a protocol for slaughter was developed. In laying hen schemes, ABI are commonly used. Some limitations are highlighted: no databases are currently available, and they are very time-consuming to develop. It is also good to analyse the ABI and to harmonize how to score them.

MS would like ABIs to be ranked in terms of importance, and they need harmonized protocols to assess them and be trained to do it. An app development to do it could be considered.

No question from the audience.

Table 3. Leonardo Vinco (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) presented the key results of the roundtable on the roadshows. Roadshows should all be customized based on the needs of the countries; and they could be combined with other events for logistical purpose. Artificial intelligence could be used to tackle the language barrier. Certain materials should be translated in advance with the support of the CA before going to the hosting country. About the stakeholder's involvement, they have the facilities but meeting with official vets and stakeholders should be separate to ensure freedom of speech. Several countries have expressed their willingness to host the roadshows.

No question from the audience.

Table 4. Emily Leishman (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) presented the results on genetic-related welfare issues. She listed some welfare issues potentially associated with different breed / growth rate (e.g., ascites, plumage cleanliness / FPD), and highlighted some key measures to consider: 1) Determine whether birds are slow-growing or just poorly-managed fast-growing birds (e.g., in outdoor range), 2) Encourage breeding companies to share their data, 3) Require regulations for pedigrees/GGP/GP. She also emphasized the idea that management is also important and genetics does not influence AW 100%. Birds are always evolving, and it is difficult to know where progress is made and where another issue will arise.

No question from the audience.

2025-2027 EURCAW-Poultry-SFA Work Programme highlights (slide 78 to 94):

- *Fitness for Transport in laying hen (A. Velarde, EURCAW-Poultry-SFA)*

Antonio Velarde (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) presented the Fitness for Transport in laying hen work currently ongoing.
No question from the audience.

- *Study on consciousness assessment in ducks' slaughterhouse (A. Varvaro Porter –EURCAW-Poultry-SFA)*

Aranzazu Varvaro Porter (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) presented the study. The EURCAW-Poultry-SFA conducts a work similar to the one already done on turkeys, broilers and rabbits, but on ducks this time.

- A MS thanked the Centre for its work. The MS needs a factsheet for ducks because they have one slaughterhouse of ducks, and they always complain that they have to adapt the FS on broilers to their situation. A visit to the slaughterhouse can be arranged in this country.

Plenary session with contribution from MSs (slide 95 to 159)

1) Welfare of rabbit on French farm (F. Depersin, FR)

The improvement of the rabbit well-being was presented with a focus on the EBENE welfare assessment tool. The work done ahead of the revision of the European legislation (end of cages area and painful practices) and the farming support and research partnership (CasDAR , 'RELEV' Rabbits) were discussed.

No question from the audience.

2) How did an NGO's enforcement request lead to better practical policy for welfare control at the slaughterhouse (J. Marques-Hermann, NL)

Context: The government has required to actively share information, if not public, citizens can request it. The requestor needs to explain why he wants the data and what data he wants. Inspection reports are sometimes requested (a lot of NGOs ask for them). Private citizens can make enforcement requests to the government (they have to meet 5 conditions to make these requests).

Case: Birds were found on their backs in the crates (these were not reported in some cases, which triggered the request). The official veterinarians complained about difficulty assessing this situation in the field. How can they write their reports better? During inspections, in case of animal welfare noncompliance, it's complicated to fine slaughterhouses (could be several reasons birds are supine). A decision tree scheme to help veterinarians in the field to perform welfare assessment was created.

Conclusion: We can use enforcement requests to work on important tasks for which, otherwise, there is no time for.

Points raised after the presentation:

- How to work together to enforce law?
- Question about fines and inspection reports for the concerned establishments.

3) Challenges in assessing what constitutes an acceptable level of pre-stun shocks in waterbath stunning (M. Cederwall)

Context: The problem is when a bird touches electrified bath with a body part (usually wings) before its head, it will experience an electric shock (pre-stun shock) and pain before being unconscious. Bigger problems were found in smaller establishments with slower-moving lines. Coaching sessions to discuss issues with the slaughterhouse were conducted. What is the threshold for action? It is a key parameter in legislation, but how to implement it? Are National guidelines available?

Open floor for feedback: What threshold is acceptable?

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.

- In a turkey slaughterhouse, only open for Christmas (from a specific MS), pre-stun shocks issues are present and were discussed.
- It's more likely in long-necked poultry. Turkeys and ducks have more problems than broilers. A more steep ramp angle to get the birds in the water in one movement could be envisaged for helping reducing pre-stun shocks.
- Discussion about a plastic plate to avoid overflow on the ramp and diminution of the shocks.
- Acceptable level is difficult to determine.
- Discussion on gas stunning vs waterbath stunning (avoiding this specific issue) had taken place.

4) Stunning Problems in Long-Winged Species, AW indicators in organic broilers and geese reared for foie-gras production (M. Camiña Montero, ES)

Context: There is a need for indicators for these different productions - either adapting or developing new ones. How to carry out official controls? For example, evaluation in a slaughterhouse. Inspectors can apply existing indicators, but they are not necessarily appropriate for animals coming from different systems like organic. More severe problems with dermatitis can appear, for example due to being outside, so perhaps there is a need to adapt the scoring system or propose a new indicator.

Open floor about suggested indicators:

- condemnation rates
- plumage dirtiness, huddling, something about escape attempt?
- clay balls on the feet – could be due to accumulation of mud from being outside.

5) Avian Influenza decision tree (L. Kremer, EURCAW-Poultry-SFA, FNRCaw)

The avian influenza decision tree was presented.

Point raised:

- Will this be translated. → it is in French and English. If there is a need it can be considered to be translated in other languages.
- What's gradually filled containers? → It's related to containerized gassing. If there is a problem, you can remove the module. As opposed to prefilled containers.

Eat & meet session

Participants had the possibility to explore the proposed topics to be covered which were not discussed before.

Topics proposed:

- Flock management of severe lameness in broilers from a welfare perspective;
- Laying hen barn aviary systems and furniture/equipment spacing;
- Climate comfort;
- Painful practices;
- What is the stage of the discussion on imposing a possible ban on cages?
- Monitoring of footpad burns in broilers;
- Handling legislation versus reality.

Virginie Michel closed the meeting on October 2, 13:00.

Satisfaction survey

An online satisfaction survey was sent to all participants. 18 participants on 26 have answered.

The interest in terms of in your activities has satisfied your expectations: <i>(Assessment criteria: 10 extremely satisfied, 1 very dissatisfied)</i>	Mean value: 8.3
Topics suggestions for next meeting (8 answers):	
Deep dive legislation vs reality	
If possible, more information on duck management, namely the slaughter of ducklings and adults, collection, and transportation.	
Quail, turkeys and ducks- ABIs and required resources including space	
The interactive sessions were very good. Please continue with them.	
No suggestions (3 times)	
To share more experiences with other CA's. How do they enforce certain regulations? What criteria do they use?	
In general, you were satisfied with the physical meeting logistic: <i>(Assessment criteria: 10 extremely satisfied, 1 very dissatisfied)</i>	18 yes, 0 no
Were you satisfied in terms of organization?	Mean value: 9.1
Do you have any suggestions for organizational improvement? (5 answers)	
Better time utilization, more presentations, more information delivered, more facilitated discussion, exchange of ideas between CA-s, and with EURCAW	
I think it would be nice to have some snacks during coffee break. Especially during the first day the afternoon was a bit long, we could only drink coffee, tea, water. Some fruit or small sandwiches would be nice to keep the guests energized.	
It was difficult and long getting from the airport to the hotel via trains etc (3 hours!). It might be useful to also suggest Ubers etc on the invite material issued for next time as this turned out to be cheaper than the train (with 3 sharing an Uber).	
It was a long afternoon the first day and several attendees, including myself were quite hungry at the end! Some snacks might be a nice addition mid-afternoon with the tea/coffee :-)	
A list of attendees and email addresses would be helpful to have.	
More time for the discussion groups would be good. 20 minutes was too short for the number of people at each table.	
No	
Very well organized.	

Were you satisfied in terms of content?		Mean value: 8.5
<i>(Assessment criteria: 10 extremely satisfied, 1 very dissatisfied)</i>		
Do you have any suggestions for future content? (4 answers)		
As per previous suggestion.		
Contributing to ongoing work that EURCAW has was good, also hearing and talking to colleagues in other countries.		
More time to share experiences between CA of different ME's. This was the best part of the meeting.		
No		
Would you like to attend the next event?		
No	0	
Do not know	1	
Yes, probably	3	
Yes, definitely	14	
Open comments on next event (4 answers):		
<p>Since time was limited, some of the items covered felt like they “could have been an email” — purely informative rather than discussion-driven. Focusing on fewer topics and leaving more room for dialogue would likely have created greater value.</p> <p>The topics and discussions also varied widely — ranging from very practical, hands-on matters to more strategic, big-picture issues. It’s unrealistic to expect one person to have expertise across the entire spectrum. In terms of deciding who the CA sends to these meetings, a participant profile could be developed to better align attendees’ backgrounds with the subject matter. Another option could be sending out questions in advance, giving the CA attendee a chance to prepare and gather input from their organization. This way, expectations are clearer, and participants may feel more invested in discussions and dialogue (which many were, though some remained very quiet).</p>		
Later, not now.		
Of course.		
Looking forward to the next meeting. Thank you very much.		
Other comments that you might want to include (5 answers):		

It was a great meeting and very well organized! It was a very fun experience and I especially loved the presentations from the CA attendees and opportunity to discuss.

It's very interesting to have different topics on different species ;)

Very enjoyable meeting and good to meet other attendees and share experiences.

Very interesting topics and nice to meet physically.

Thank you very much for everything.

Conclusion

The feedback from the participants was very positive. The most appreciated aspect appeared to be the opportunity given to exchange experiences. Future content suggestions will be taken into account.



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