

# 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU Platform on animal welfare

Subgroup on the Welfare of Poultry  
Overview of the subgroup work

05.-06.12.2022



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# The subgroup: members

- 10 members + Commission + guests
  - **2 Independent experts**
  - **1 Civil society organisation**
  - **3 Business and professional organisations**
  - **4 Member States / EEA Countries**
- Guests invited for the presentation of specific issues
- Up to now: 9 meeting in total (5 since June)



Evangelia Sossidou / Leonardo J. Vi

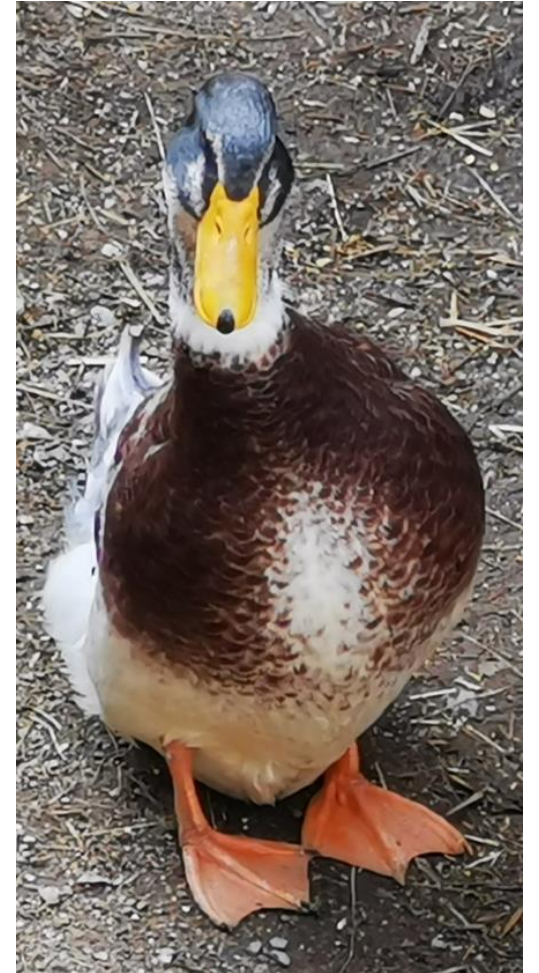
Eurogroup for animals

AVEC / COPA / FVE

Czech Republic / Denmark / Spain /  
Norway

# Topics for discussion (1)

- ✓ Decrease negative impacts of selective **breeding** on the welfare of animals
- ✓ Prohibition of **cages**
- ✓ Addressing the **five domains**
- ✓ **Training requirements** for animal handlers (skills and competences)
- ✓ Mandatory/ voluntary animal-based **indicators**
- ✓ **Monitoring, measuring and reporting tools**



# Topics for discussion (2)

- ✓ **Outdoor** access/ fresh air, **light**, environmental **enrichment**
- ✓ **Space** allowance (floor and height)
- ✓ **Mutilations**
- ✓ **Duty-of-care** (SOP)
- ✓ **Current legislation**
- **Health management**
- **Further upcoming topics**



# Training requirements for animal handlers (skills and competences)

## Views of the subgroup:

- **Anybody** handling an animals (including those working only on a temporary basis with animals, e.g. catchers) as well as owners need to be competent.
- Important that people have **at least a basic training** before they start their work with animals (mandatory)
- **List** in Directive 2007/43/EC is a good basis but should be complemented by “animal behavior”, “welfare indicators”, “management” and “housing systems”.
- **Harmonised requirements** for the competences and skills but to be organized by the Member States.

# Mandatory/ voluntary animal-based indicators

## Views of the subgroup:

- Animal based indicators plus resource based indicators  
Policy / management
- Indicators: to measure in the slaughterhouse (all farms): FPD, dead on arrival, rejects  
Difficulty: birds not going to slaughter (e.g. laying hens, quail, breeders)
- For non slaughtered and for farmer's monitoring: indicators on farm: plumage cover, lameness

# Monitoring, measuring and reporting tools (1)

- Questions to ask:
  - Should the same **number of (farmer's) inspections** be kept (now: 1-2)?  
Are there holdings/ situations where **more frequent** ones are needed?  
Are there holdings where daily inspections are **not needed**?
  - On-farm monitoring by way of using **few indicators** – which one to choose?
  - **Risk-based** on-farm monitoring by the CA which farm, how often?  
-> Check best/worst farms – plus random selection with x % of all farms
  - **What** is checked?  
-> all animals in the building. Identify “yellow”/”red” animals (-> scoring)

# Monitoring, measuring and reporting tools (2)

- Points discussed:
  - **Monitoring** could be based on targets – to be met periodically
  - Consideration of an updated system with a **comparable set of indicators on EU level**, measuring and allowing to compare:
    - > trends on AW in certain areas
    - > using a simple and accessible data system - multidimensional
    - > this could result from the use of indicators with harmonized scoring + to benchmark the enforcement
    - > by way of database.
  - **Reporting**: number that could come from a national level accessible from EU level (e.g. by EURCAW).



# Outdoor access/ fresh air, light

- Views of the subgroup:
  - A well managed outdoor access = fresh air, natural light and environmental enrichment for e.g. foraging, dustbathing stimulates the bird.
  - To (mandatory) require access to an outside area is premature. Knowledge (of farmers) and availability of facilities need to be ensured.
  - “(Covered) veranda” would be a step forward; this also provides for natural daylight.
  - The subgroup sees a huge need to improve the conditions inside => focus in the first place on inside improvements.

# Environmental enrichment

- Views of the subgroup:
  - A **more complex environment** with separate activity areas is needed **for all poultry** – to name specifically broilers, pullets and laying hens (but also others, e.g. turkeys).
  - **Materials needed:** access to litter from the first day of life (foraging behavior), roughage (e.g. lucerne), peat, sand (allow dust bathing), pecking blocks (and/or straw bales), for ducks and geese: bathing.
  - **Installations needed:** perches with ramps or raised sitting levels (platforms).
  - Since birds like to synchronize, all of this must be **accessible**.

# Space allowance (floor and height) (1)

- Views of the subgroup:
  - **EFSA opinions** awaited (12/2022 and 03/2023)
  - **Interaction** between space allowance and other factors.
  - Arrange different zones in the house to allow different types of behavior (**functional areas**).
  - Not all birds perform behavior at the same time but they like to **synchronise**.

# Space allowance (floor and height) (2)

- Views of the subgroup:
  - **Broiler:** 20-25 kg/m<sup>2</sup> needed to perform welfare relevant behavior; 25-30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> lead to welfare benefits => the current maxima of 42 kg/m<sup>2</sup> are far too high.
  - Already in **young age** more birds are installed than good for their welfare (according to marketing standards 15 birds/m<sup>2</sup>), leading to increased risk of FPD and skin lesions
  - **Vertical space** must be high enough to allow enrichment materials (e.g. straw bales) in the barn – plus space to perform natural behavior.

# Mutilations

- Views of the subgroup:
  - Of the painful procedures performed on poultry performed on poultry today, phasing out - with transitional periods - is **possible** for:
    - > beak trimming for laying hens and layer breeders (no problem is seen to ban it immediately for broiler breeders)
    - > toe clipping (after 5 years transitional period)
    - > comb clipping in white layers (currently difficult, but breeds are already available where this is not needed)
  - Essential is management (training of farmers), adaptation of keeping methods.
  - Emergency measures in case of outbreaks of injurious pecking must be in place.
- 13 • No possibility is currently seen for the keeping of non beak trimmed turkeys.

# Duty-of-care (SOP)

- Views of the subgroup:
  - Do not foresee SOPs such as they are common for slaughterhouses (large companies).
  - Foresee an animal welfare plan to be set up and specifically designed by/for each farm (tailored to the specific farm).
  - Legislation should define the issues to be addressed in the plan.
  - Support by a vet, approved as specialised on poultry, or a specialised advisor to support on a regular basis => go through the plan, give input, adapt, advise.
  - The plan should include a contingency plan. It could include Guides to good management practice
  - No approval by the competent authority. But to be looked at during inspection.

# Additional topic: screening of current legislation


- Suggestions of the subgroup:
  - Delete all **exceptions** but keep – refined - exception for small farms
  - **Definitions:**
    - > “cage”, “breeding” => no common definition available / align as much as possible with existing definitions (AHL, OCR, etc.)
    - > “Owner”, “keeper” => important to define owner of what (of the animals, not necessarily of the building), include “employed staff” (non-permanent, e.g. catchers);
  - **Unclear/ interpretable terms** => do not necessarily delete/ specify but describe<sup>15</sup> the intention, the target (e.g. “sufficient space to flap the wings”)

# Next steps and outlook for further topics



- **Next meeting in January, followed by about one meeting per three months.**
- **Topics to discuss as shown earlier including further upcoming issues.**





Thank you for your attention

Thank you to the members of the  
subgroup for the work and the  
openness to share knowledge and views