



EU PLATFORM ON ANIMAL WELFARE

15th meeting

WebEx video conference

Monday, 17 June 2024, 12.30 – 17.30 CET, Brussels time

The meeting was web streamed. Click [here](#) to access the recording.

– SUMMARY REPORT –

The 15th meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare provided the opportunity to inform Platform members on the progress of discussions in the Council on the Commission's legislative proposal on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability as well as to present the Commission Staff Working Document summarising evidence supporting this proposal. Furthermore, the Commission presented the summary of feedback from the public consultations on the proposal on dogs and cats and on the protection of animals during transport. The agenda of the meeting also included an update on activities of EFSA and on the four EU Reference Centres on Animal Welfare as well as a presentation of the WOAHA Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe. In addition, participants were informed about the ongoing Strategic Dialogue on the future of Agriculture and about trainings provided by the Better Training for Safer Food Program. The meeting also saw the presentation of the ClearFarm project which built a platform to control animal welfare in pig and dairy cattle farming and the PPILOW project aiming to improve welfare in low-input and organic pig and poultry systems, as well as the leaflet on equids working in tourism. Finally, the Commission presented the outcomes of the call for applications and future tasks of the subgroup on animal welfare policy indicators established under the Platform. The meeting allowed live discussion and exchange of views between representatives of Member States, NGOs, professional organisations, and independent experts.

OPENING

CHAIR: Claire Bury, Deputy Director General for Food sustainability, DG SANTE

Opening by Claire Bury, Deputy Director General for Food sustainability, DG SANTE

The Chair welcomed the participants, in the room and online. She presented the [agenda](#) which was adopted without comments.

Update on the Belgian Presidency's work on animal welfare [PP]

The Belgian Presidency presented an overview of its work on animal welfare, mainly on the legislative proposal on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability, which *inter alia* included clarification of definitions (e.g. inclusion of a definition of hybrids), amendments of provisions regarding space allowances, euthanasia, and approval of breeding establishments. It mentioned the organisation of a Presidency symposium "Call to care for animal welfare", which aimed to elevate the topic on the European agenda.

Commission Staff Working Document summarising evidence supporting the legislative proposal on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability [PP]

In its presentation, the Commission outlined the current problems, including the lack of harmonised rules and the prevalence of illegal trade. The objectives included improving welfare, ensuring a level playing field for operators, and better tools to tackle illegal trade. The document also highlighted the importance of coherence with existing regulations such as the animal health law.

Questions and Answers (common to both presentations)

FVE asked about euthanasia practices on dogs, specifically the involvement of non-veterinarians. Four Paws questioned the Commission's position on mandatory identification and registration (I&R) for all dogs and cats. COGECA inquired about the inclusion of other companion animals in the breeding process and how the competitiveness of European producers and animal welfare standards in third countries would be assured. Eurogroup for Animals asked about the consideration of comments from the public consultation in the Council's deliberations, why in the Staff Working Document special breeds are mentioned as a tradition in some countries and how the breeding of animals with exaggerated features has been addressed. Animal Health Europe asked why small breeders are excluded from obligations under Article 13 of the proposal, given that this would have consequences for animal and public health.

The Commission informed that the proposal focuses on dogs and cats due to their significant welfare issues. Consideration of special breeds as a "tradition" is a historical issue with the focus on trade, not breeds. The EU cannot legislate for third countries, but it can require equivalent measures to raise animal welfare standards, which will translate into better prices for breeders. The exclusion of small

breeders from certain obligations was a political choice motivated by the wish to propose proportionate measures but the requirement for identification and registration applies to all breeders. It informed that public consultation feedback was being considered and summarised for the co-legislators.

Belgian Presidency clarified that euthanasia would only be performed by veterinarians, and the term "killing" was removed from the legislation to avoid confusion. It mentioned the need to apply a holistic approach to the issue of breed of animals with exaggerated features and tried to find the best way to include it in the proposal. As regards small breeders, in the current text of the Presidency, the obligations provided for in Article 13 apply to all breeders, regardless of the size of their establishment.

Information on priorities on animal welfare of the upcoming Hungarian Presidency

The upcoming **Hungarian Presidency** outlined their priorities, which includes continuing the work on the legislative proposals for dogs and cats, and animal transport. It expressed readiness to collaborate with the European Parliament and other stakeholders to finalise the legal texts.

AFTERNOON SESSION

CHAIR: Bernard Van Goethem, Director for Crisis preparedness in food, animals and plants, DG SANTE

Update on EFSA's activities related to the welfare of beef cattle, turkeys, fur animals and horses, and information on ongoing grants and calls [\[PP\]](#)

EFSA provided an update on ongoing activities and mandates, detailed the engagement strategy with stakeholders, which includes public meetings, calls for evidence, and technical hearings. Informed about ongoing grants and calls for projects related to animal welfare.

Questions and Answers

Several participants raised questions about the engagement strategy, the balance of interests in consultations, and the handling of information gaps (**COGECA**, **Evangelia Sossidou**, **COPA**, **Eurogroup**, **HSI**, **EMN**, **EFFAB**). **Joe Collins** observed that the established category of working equids is very broad and would include animals used in very different ways.

EFSA thanked all for the input provided and assured that EFSA strives for transparency and quality in their consultations. It doesn't matter if the input is provided by individuals or associations as a whole body. The quality of information provided is crucial. The technical hearings will be organised for the

scientific opinion on turkeys, while for beef and cattle it still under discussion. People from the different organisations will be invited to provide feedback. With respect to horses, the idea of the mandate is that a horse is a horse, regardless of the use to which it is put. It is a starting point for making recommendations or an assessment. EFSA is currently working on two separate opinions, one on the slaughter of animals on farms (the reasons for slaughter are the euthanasia of sick animals that do not enter the food chain) and the second on the slaughter of animals for meat. EFSA welcomed the provision of data on horses by the EU Reference Centre for animal welfare for ruminants and equines. The decision to reopen previous opinions rests with the Commission.

Update from the EU Reference Centres on Animal Welfare (EURCAWs) [PP]

The Directors of the four EU Reference Centres presented their roles and activities. The newly designated Reference Centre for aquatic animals was presented, highlighting its focus on various species and production systems. The EURCAWs are currently finalising their three-year work programs, which include supporting to Member States with scientific and technical evidence.

Questions and Answers

During the discussion, several questions and suggestions were raised. FVE suggested a common website and newsletter for all reference centres. CIWF inquired about further support for enforcing legislation on tail docking. Spain and Eurogroup for Animals asked about the ethics committee for the EURCAW for aquatic animals. AVEC inquired about stakeholder involvement and the usage of materials produced by the reference centres. The Netherlands asked about the selection of factsheet subjects and the usage of training toolkits. EFFAB suggested more coordinated approach to the EURCAWs activities. FAO inquired how the international community could benefit from EURCAW's knowledge and material. EMN suggested that some EURCAW's publications could benefit from public consultations.

Directors of the EURCAWs addressed the questions, explaining the processes for selecting topics, stakeholder involvement, and the usage of materials. They emphasised the importance of harmonising processes and learning from each other and highlighted the role of the reflection board in engaging stakeholders. The creation of an ethics committee is still under discussion between EURCAWs.

The Commission assured that there is no conflict of interest in the management of the EURCAW for aquatic animal. All Centres are operating in full transparency under the requirements of the Official Controls Regulation.

Presentation of the information leaflet on equids working in tourism by the voluntary initiative on the welfare of equids [PP]

Joe Collins presented the leaflet designed to help tourists assess the welfare of equids used in tourism, which was developed with input from various stakeholders.

Questions and Answers

FVE thanked for the leaflet and expressed its support for its approval by the Platform.

The Platform acknowledged the work of the voluntary initiative on the welfare of equids and supported the dissemination of the leaflet [\[PP\]](#)

Closing of the 1st day of meeting

The meeting concluded with logistical information for participants.

Tuesday, 18 June 2024, 09.30 – 13.10 CET, Brussels time

CHAIR: Head of Unit 'Animal Welfare', Directorate for Crisis preparedness in food, animals and plants, DG SANTE
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Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe of the World Organisation for Animal Health [\[PP\]](#)

The WOAHP provided an update on the activities of the OIE's regional platform for Animal Welfare in Europe. It highlighted the organisation's centennial celebration and the development of the fourth action plan, which aims to improve animal welfare across 53 European countries. Key priority topics include the slaughter of animals, animal transport, dog population management, animal welfare in natural disasters, and welfare work in equids. The speaker detailed the achievements of the first action plan, which saw an 87% completion rate, and outlined the objectives and activities of the fourth action plan, including capacity building, training modules, and self-assessment tools.

Questions and Answers

Questions and suggestions were raised regarding collaboration with other initiatives ([Eurogroup for Animals](#), [COGECA](#), [Evangelia Sossidou](#)), the inclusion of training on laying hens, and the accessibility of training materials for non-EU countries.

The WOAHP confirmed ongoing efforts to collaborate with relevant partners and stakeholders, including EU reference centres, and highlighted the importance of stakeholder involvement in disseminating knowledge and resources.

Better Training for Safer Food Program – trainings and materials related to animal welfare [\[PP\]](#)

The Commission provided an overview of the programme, which aims to enhance the competence and knowledge of EU rules among officials and stakeholders. The BTSF Academy, an online platform, stores training materials and offers multilingual access to various courses. He highlighted the inclusion

of animal welfare topics and the recent addition of Norwegian and Icelandic languages. The plans to make the Academy publicly accessible were mentioned.

Questions and Answers

Participants inquired about the inclusion of laying hens in training modules (HSI), the process for requesting training in third countries (FAO, WOAH), and the feedback mechanism for course improvement (COPA, Animal Welfare Foundation, EFFAB).

The Commission confirmed the inclusion of various animal welfare topics and the possibility of extending training to third countries. He also emphasized the importance of feedback for enhancing course content.

Update on the Strategic Dialogue on the future of Agriculture

The representative of DG AGRI presented an update on the strategic dialogue aimed at depolarising the debate on agriculture and advancing the transition to sustainable food systems. The dialogue involves 29 stakeholders representing different actors in the food chain. The group addresses four key questions related to economic performance, combining economic and environmental goals, innovation, and food system sustainability. The speaker emphasized the importance of building a common understanding and actionable recommendations.

Questions and Answers

Questions were raised about the transparency and inclusiveness of the strategic dialogue (Four Paws, HSI, AVEC), the potential for tangible results, the integration of animal welfare as a pillar of sustainability (CIWF) as well its adequate funding to help competitiveness and the retention of young farmers at the farm (FESASS, COPA).

The representative of DG AGRI assured that the dialogue aims to complement existing platforms and highlighted the importance of balancing various interests and ensuring follow-up actions. She also acknowledged the need for innovative funding mechanisms and market-based incentives to support the transition. She acknowledged the importance of consumer willingness and ability to pay more for food, suggesting mechanisms like certification and labelling schemes to recognise and reward efforts towards animal welfare in the food chain.

Summary of feedback from citizens and stakeholders on the Commission proposal on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability [PP]

The Commission presented the feedback received on its proposal on the welfare of dogs and cats. Most of responses came from EU citizens and NGOs, with key points including the extension of identification and registration requirements to all dogs and cats, a ban on the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops, and the inclusion of a clear definition of extreme breeding.

Questions and Answers

Questions were raised about how feedback submitted by an organisation representing thousands of members is considered compared to citizens comments (COGECA, EMN) and the use of collected feedback (Four Paws).

The Commission assured that the public consultation procedure is institutionalised and that the methodology used to analyse the feedback takes into account the type of stakeholders.

Summary of feedback from citizens and stakeholders on the Commission proposal on the protection of animals during transport [PP]

The Commission summarised the feedback on its Commission proposal on the protection of animals during transport. The key issues raised included the definition of economic activity, exemptions for sports competitions, contingency plans for short journeys, veterinary supervision, and temperature regulations. The feedback highlighted the need to balance animal welfare with economic, social, and environmental impacts.

Questions and Answers

Stakeholders raised questions about the value of consultations post adoption and how the Commission incorporates these responses, most inspiring new ideas from the feedback provided (Four Paws, FESASS, ELPHA, Animal Welfare Foundation), the impact of stakeholder responses, particularly regarding the export of live animals to countries with lower welfare standards (CIWF), and the involvement of transporters in the consultation process (Animal Health Europe).

The Commission clarified that while they summarise and forward the information to the Council and Parliament, the original proposal remains unchanged. However, the Commission is in a better negotiation position thanks to the provided feedback. The Commission confirmed the significant participation in the consultation from logistics companies and transporters.

ClearFarm – a platform to control animal welfare in pig and dairy cattle farming [PP]

The researcher from the University of Barcelona presented the Clear Farm project, which uses novel technologies to assess and improve animal welfare on farms. The project focuses on pigs and dairy cattle, integrating data from various sensors into a platform that provides real-time monitoring for farmers and welfare labelling for consumers. The project has made significant progress, particularly in dairy cattle, but identified gaps in pig welfare assessment.

Questions and Answers

The speaker informed that the project relied on animal-based indicators so how animals are coping with their condition (Welfarm).

'Poultry and Pig Low-input and Organic production systems' – presentation of the PPILOW project

[\[PP\]](#)

The **speaker** from the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment presented the PPILOW project, which aims to improve welfare in low-input and organic pig and poultry systems. The project has identified key issues and implemented several solutions, including dual-purpose genotypes and on-farm hatching. The project also explored the use of medicinal plants to manage parasitism in pigs.

Questions and Answers

Answering the questions, **the speaker** informed that the small-scale producers were included in the project (**Slow Food**) and that the research of the use of medicinal plants to tackle parasitism in farms and other breeds of pigs will be conducted by a Romanian university (**Welfarm**).

Subgroup on animal welfare policy indicators established under the EU Platform on Animal Welfare: outcome of the call for applications and future tasks

[\[PP\]](#)

The Commission provided an update on the new subgroup focusing on developing animal welfare policy indicators. The subgroup will cover various species and will aim to measure progress towards policy objectives. The first meeting was scheduled for end of June, with subsequent meetings focusing on specific species.

Questions and Answers

The last presentation of the agenda about the future mandate of the Platform was postponed to the next meeting.

AOB

Chair of the voluntary initiative on the global and international dimension of animal welfare provided an update on the group activities. The initiative plans to hold a panel discussion back-to-back with the next platform meeting to reflect on progress and explore future actions, including the possibility of developing a resource hub or turning the initiative into a subgroup.

Closing of the meeting

The Chair thanked all Members for their participation. The meeting concluded with a reminder of the next platform meeting scheduled for 21 November 2024.