

Final Minutes
Second Meeting of the pig subgroup of the EU platform on Animal Welfare
27 March 2019, Grange

This was the second meeting of the pig subgroup of the EU platform on animal welfare. The meeting was not public. The pig subgroup aims to contribute to the objectives of the Platform by providing information, recommendations and proposals for practices which help deliver better pig welfare. The role of the platform is to assist the Commission with the development and exchange of coordinated actions on animal welfare.

Following the first meeting on 26 November 2018, members of the group developed four papers: one on measuring tails and tail lesions at the slaughter line; and three on how authorities could instruct official vets to assess compliance criteria for tail biting risks related to health, competition and aggression; and diet. Private veterinary practitioners can also advise farmers on preventive and remedial measures based on the same criteria, thus ensuring continuity and support to farmers working towards a transition to keeping pigs with intact tails.

The sub-group appreciated the effort made by the authors to produce comprehensive and very stimulating documents for discussion. However, feed back to the authors had been limited (only 25% of the group had commented on the documents). Commission clarified that consultation between meetings includes members sharing, as necessary, documents with other members of the organisation they represent. It is useful to seek the opinion of other experts in their organisations between meetings.

The meeting focussed on the four papers and sought to elaborate advice to the Commission on what coordinated action is needed to bring about a reduction in the routine tail docking of pigs. The Following Action Points were agreed:

Action Points		
ISSUE	RESPONSIBILITY	DEADLINE
Subgroup to draw up a one page document of relevant recommendations using the Keeling/Valros paper as reference and taking into account the information presented by Hans Spoolder on the potential of the developing technology for machine measurement and scoring of tails in slaughterhouses	K Olsson L Keeling A Valros	Finalise mid May Present to Platform June/July Upload to Digital Tool after presentation Platform Vote September
Subgroup (and particularly Member States) to submit comments and agree key points from the 3 draft papers on indicators for tail biting risks relating to compliance criteria on health, competition and aggression, and diet	K Olsson Subgroup Member State reps	Comments end April Finalise mid May
Subgroup to draw up a one page document of relevant recommendations using the key points and the 3 papers on compliance criteria as reference documents	K Olsson E Nalon E Baxter N O' Connell	Finalise mid May Present to Platform June/July Upload to Digital Tool after presentation

		Platform Vote September
Distribution to Member States (FVE, EAPHM) of 3 revised papers on key indicators for tail biting risks relating to compliance criteria on health, competition and aggression, and diet	Commission services	Distribution end April

Measuring tail lesions

1. **Linda Keeling** and **Anna Valros** presented the objectives and methodologies behind their papers on measuring tail damage at the slaughterhouse which had two aims:

Aim 1 To have 100% pigs with intact tails (not tail docked – not tail bitten). Benchmark progress towards this by recording pigs with intact tails at slaughter

Aim 2 Development of a system of recording tail damage at the slaughterhouse that can be used to give feedback and advice to the farmers to reduce tail damage, so there is no need to tail dock. This involves scoring the length of the tail and, if there are lesions, record different type of tail damage

The following recommendations from the Sub-group were agreed following detailed discussions:

- 1 Intact tails should be recorded at slaughter, even if more work is needed on the definition of an 'intact' tail
- 2 Further work/studies should be made to give simple, practical outputs that can be utilised in the context of different slaughterhouse systems to provide verification data to complement on farm assessment of tail damage:
 - A) Definition, morphology and characteristics of the end of an intact tail
 - B) Tail damage caused during scalding
 - C) Definition of a shortened tail
 - D) Definition of major and minor tail wounds
- 3 Training material and calibration routines should be developed to ensure reliability in scoring tail length and lesions
- 4 A common threshold¹ should be developed for a level of tail biting damage under which producers should make the ethical decision to start moving towards rearing pigs with intact tails (expert consultation - perhaps EFSA- to assess pain caused by docking and biting and overall health/welfare of animals in context of commercial setting)

¹ This threshold could be calculated based on, for example the formula suggested here, using available scientific data on prevalence of different types of damage, as well as efficacy of docking

- 5 Commission services should utilise Art 21 (8) of Regulation 2017/625 to direct Member States to utilise practical animal welfare indicators in slaughterhouse to improve the performance of official controls

Compliance Criteria

The aim of the three documents presented on compliance criteria was to give suggestions and guidance on how authorities could instruct inspectors carrying out official controls to assess risk parameters on farm related to legislative requirements in a practical way that could be integrated in a routine official control or a practitioner consultation. Veterinary associations (European and national) could also recommend to their members to apply the same criteria when helping farmers transition towards keeping pigs with intact tails.

2. Health Status

Elena Nalon presented the objectives and methodology behind the paper on health status as a risk factor for tail biting. It utilised the validated work of Welfare Quality and more practical derivative assessment systems such as AssureWel and focussed primarily, but not exclusively, on animal-based indicators. For each legislative requirement (Directives 2008/120/EC and 98/58/EC) one or more indicators were suggested.

3. Competition and Aggression

Emma Baxter presented the objectives and methodology behind the paper on space and competition as risk factors for tail biting. The document summarised the criteria, the risk factors and provided supporting material using scientific evidence and legal minimums where available. It made recommendations on farm indicators (animal, resource and management). Allometric principles for space allowances were used throughout.

4. Diet

Niamh O'Connell presented the objectives and methodology behind the paper on diet as a risk factor for tail biting. The working methods were similar to those of the paper on competition and aggression and there were inevitably overlaps as access to feed and water are major risks for tail biting. However, there is much anecdotal but little peer reviewed scientific evidence available and for this reason specific recommendations for assessment or for changes farmers could make to improve conditions proved difficult to elaborate.

The following actions from the Sub-group were agreed following detailed discussions:

- Some further work is necessary to distil the documents down to key points that OVs and others could check on a farm visit. Therefore, sub-group members and specifically Member State representatives should provide comments to the authors in advance of the next meeting to finalise this.
- Where key points may not be possible, general principles should, if possible, be taken from the documents to assist veterinarians in carrying out official controls.

- In view of the complex nature of some of the related health and welfare issues, and the limited frequency of official controls, Commission services should liaise with FVE and specialist pig practitioner groups such as EAPHM to promote further development and consideration of the use of these indicators to assist in routine health assessments during farm visits.
- The 3 finalised documents should be sent to the Commission to consider making them available to the EU reference centre for Animal Welfare (EURCAW) to assist in their development of "iceberg" indicators to assist official veterinarians in assessing risk parameters on farm related to legislative requirements on competition and aggression.
- The 3 finalised documents should be distributed to Member States Competent Authorities as soon as possible to assist them in the development of compliance criteria relating to risk factors on health.

Any Other Business

5. **Hans Spolder** presented information on an automated tail assessment system being developed by the Danish Meat Research Institute. EURCAW's initial outputs related to tail biting risk will be to define iceberg indicators for this area before the end of summer 2019. A tiered approach will be adopted- general indicators as first level then second level focussing on specific areas of concern.
6. **Terry Cassidy** gave an overview of the DG SANTE project on Animal Welfare Indicators.
7. There was a misunderstanding about the circulation of draft documents for comment within the sub-group. Draft documents **can and should** be circulated for comment to colleagues of sub-group members within their organisations. However, due to the draft nature of these documents, they should not be circulated outside the sub-group unless specifically authorised by the authors.

Follow up of Action Points from previous meeting

8. **Mathias Chapman-Rose** uploaded the KTBL tail scoring information and the German authorities risk assessment procedures from their Action Plan to the Digital Tool.
9. **Birte Broberg** informed that it isn't possible to upload all the information relating to the Danish risk assessment process to the Digital tool because: it is not just one but a series of documents and guidance in a step-by-step process; many of the documents are in Danish; the risk assessment process belongs to the pig sector. However, Birte will upload links to the SEGES website to make additional details available.

10. **Commission services** have drafted letters asking Member States to publish their action plans on CIRCABC open access network for pigs [Reducing Tail Biting and Routine Tail Docking of Pigs](#) and on the Digital Tool.

Next Meeting

The third meeting of the pig sub-group is scheduled for Wednesday, 10th July and Thursday (half day), 11th July 2019 and the duration has been extended to one and a half days by agreement of the group.

List of Participants

European Commission: DG Health and Food Safety: Terence Cassidy, Desmond Maguire, Lorna Scott, Vasco Antunes, Juha Junntila, Marguerite Kuzma.

Member States: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands.

Business and Professional Organisations: Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations (COPA), European Meat Network (EMN), Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives (COGECA), International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE)

Civil Society Organisations: Compassion in World Farming, (CIWF), Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), World Animal Protection

Independent Experts: Anna Valros, Linda Keeling, Niamh O'Connell

Invited Experts: Johannes Vugts, HK Scan, Elena Nalon, Eurogroup for Animals

Observers: European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare