



Brussels, 20 November 2024

Minutes

Meeting of the Animal Health Advisory Committee, the sub-group of the Advisory group on the food chain and animal and plant health held on November 20th, 2024.

1. Introduction, opening: Francisco REVIRIEGO GORDEJO – Head of Unit G2 Animal Health

The Commission welcomed the Members of the Animal Health Advisory Committee and the Members of the Council of the European Union Presidency Trio –Belgium, Hungary and Poland and briefly explained the purpose of the meeting and then proceeded with the approved agenda.

2. Ongoing work on animal health legislation under Animal Health Law (Unit G2 Animal Health)

• Update of the state of play of rules for disease control (amendments to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687).

The Commission presented the amendments to the rules on prevention and control of certain diseases. In addition to the amendments already presented in previous meetings, several other new ones were presented, that intend: to allow certain movements deemed to be safe but are currently prohibited, to clarify on the activities required in the affected establishment (e.g. cleaning and disinfection, repopulation, lifting of measures), to facilitate reading and understanding of the risk-mitigating treatments for products of animal origin. In addition, certain possible amendments as presented in the previous meetings have been dropped (e.g. certain derogations) or revised (e.g. conditions for lifting the measures in the surveillance zone).

- AVEC asked if derogations are possible in accordance with the Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687 or proposed by the amendments for the movements, excluding for immediate slaughter, of ducks/geese from restricted zone. The Commission clarified that derogations are possible in accordance with the current rules and proposed amendments, only for the categories of poultry that cannot continue to be kept in the establishments where they are, i.e. for day-old chicks from hatcheries and of ready-to-lay poultry.
- AVEC and EUCVB asked on the timing for the adoption of the proposed amendments. The Commission informed on the intention to adopt the draft Delegated Regulation in the second quarter of 2025.
- ECVC asked if changes are foreseen with the amendments on the movements of milk from restricted zone established due to SPGP. The Commission informed that such amendments are proposed.

• Update and state of play of rules for entry into the Union (amendments to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692).

The Commission summarised the objectives of the work on the draft Delegated Regulation amending and correcting Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards rules for entry into

the Union, and the movement and handling after entry of consignments of certain animals, germinal products and products of animal origin and presented the draft amendments.

- EAZA thanked the Commission for taking into consideration certain proposals in relation to captive birds.
- FESASS asked for further details in relation to the intended amendment on epizootic haemorrhagic disease. The Commission clarified that further technical details on the formulation of the intended amendments are included in the additional slides of the presentation and invited stakeholders to thoroughly analyse those amendments, if needed.
- UECBV asked for a timeline as regards this ongoing work. At least one additional Expert group meeting on this Delegated Regulation is envisaged, possibly in the beginning of next year. The Commission also highlighted that the work related to the amendment of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 is also interlinked (for example on treatments) with an ongoing work on Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687. The Commission aims to finalise the work on both Delegated Regulations without delay.

- **Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/2623 on poultry compartments.**

The Commission informed the Members of the AHAC about the publication and entry into force of the Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/2623 and the timeframe for the approval and possible use of poultry compartments, highlighting the necessity for the industry willing to take advantage of the instrument to begin the process ‘in peacetime’ without waiting, in order for the potential compartments to be approved when the revised Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687, which includes derogations to movement restrictions for compartments, is in force.

- **Amendments to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/688 on movements of terrestrial animals in the Union.**

The Commission presented key elements of a recently adopted Commission Delegated Regulation that amends the rules related to epizootic haemorrhagic disease (EHD) applicable to movements within the Union of ungulates. The amendment provides for additional risk-mitigating measures when the ungulates are sourced from areas affected by EHD. The additional risk-mitigating measures are vaccination and specific risk-mitigating measures defined by the competent authority of the Member State of destination. The Regulation is currently under the scrutiny of the European Parliament and of the Council that will expire on 12 December 2024.

- COPA-COGECA and FESASS thanked the Commission for this amendment.

3. Evaluation of the Animal Health Law (Unit G2 Animal Health).

The Commission provided an update on the ongoing evaluation of the Animal Health Law (AHL), covering progress, scope, and upcoming activities, while emphasizing the importance of active participation and constructive feedback from stakeholders in the process. The Commission also expressed gratitude for the significant contributions to the AHL evaluation made through the Hungarian Presidency’s initiative, which involved distributing a questionnaire among Member States to assess their experiences with the AHL, identify needs for reducing administrative burdens, and simplify legislation. The Hungarian Presidency provided a brief update on the feedback, noting that more detailed results will be presented at the next AGRIFCH meeting.

Ecorys, the contractor supporting the evaluation study, presented the outcomes of the public feedback gathered during the “Call for Evidence”.

- FVE, FESASS, EPO, UECBV, COPA-COGECA and AnimalHeathEurope, expressed strong interest in participating in consultation activities and appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation. However, concerns were raised

regarding the complexity of the AHL package, as it is relatively new and still being implemented across Member States, making it challenging to fully assess its consequences. Additionally, while members valued the opportunity to participate in surveys, some noted that certain questions were either outside their operational scope or too general in nature.

4. **Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) and Animal by-products (Unit G2 Animal Health)**

- **Animal by-products**

The Commission provided an update on alignment of Commission Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 with Official Control Regulation (Reg. (EU) 2017/625) and Animal Health Law (Reg. (EU) 2016/429) and on the state of play of a draft amendment of Commission Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 in that respect.

The Commission also pointed out on the revision of Article 3 on determination of end points for technical products and petfood which will be replaced by a new Commission Delegated Regulation. The Commission also provided an overview of several EFSA scientific opinions which will be included in the draft.

- IPIFF asked if all the recent amendments of Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 will be included in the draft on alignment of Regulation (EU) No 142/2011; and about the state of play of the draft document PLAN /1918/2022 which introduced rules for composting of frass.
- FEFAC asked if the new draft on alignment Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 will include a new certificate for imports of compound feed of animal origin, instead of current multiple certificates for imports of each component of animal origin in the compound feed.

The Commission explained that all recent amendment of Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 will be included in the draft which was presented. The draft PLAN /1918/2022 is still in the pipeline due to certain technical problems, which should be solved soon. A possible new certificate for imports of compound feed is not envisaged in the current draft on alignment of Commission Regulation (EU) No 142/2011.

- **TSE Roadmap**

The Commission informed about the amendments it considers making to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, in order to align it to newly adopted international standards and scientific opinion. Some members indicated that they welcomed the Commission initiative.

- CEFIC added that beyond gelatine for food and feed, similar alignment should be ensured for gelatine for pharmaceutical uses.
- FEFAC highlighted the growing issue of circularity and the possible need to review current feed restrictions. FEFAC also wondered how to participate in EFSA scientific advice process.
- UECBV welcomed the intention to bring SRM rules closer to international standards from a commercial but also a sustainability (e.g. wastewater management) perspective.

5. **Update on animal diseases (Unit G2 Animal Health)**

- **Latest state of play on African swine fever (ASF).**

The Commission presented an update of the ASF disease situation in the EU, and particularly the situation during the 2024 high season where 300 ASF outbreaks in domestic pigs were

reported from June to September. In addition to Romania where the ASF situation is still challenging the other countries concerned by this increased number of outbreaks in domestic pigs were Germany, Italy and Poland. The situation is currently normalised, and in certain countries even improved as for instance in Sweden and Croatia. Finally, the Commission informed that new Scientific Opinion of EFSA on the assessment of the ASF risk factors will be published at the end of November 2024. Risk assessment confirms that certain current tools to control ASF in wild boar (e.g. fences) are fit for the purpose, that ticks didn't play a role in the current epidemic in the EU and that the role of insects on ASF transmission in domestic pigs is negligible.

- **Latest state of play on avian influenza (including zoonotic avian influenza) (HPAI).**

The Commission presented an update of the HPAI disease situation in the EU and worldwide, including on the situation with infection of dairy cows in the US with HPAI H5N1 virus.

- AVEC asked on the HPAI detections in pigs in the US and if this is considered to increase the risk in the evolution of the disease situation. The Commission informed that indeed, in one backyard that was confirmed with an HPAI outbreak in poultry, two out of five pigs that shared same water source and facilities with the infected birds were found positive for HPAI virus. However, the situation did not evolve and no other cases of HPAI have been further detected so far.
- ECVC has been interested if the vaccination of ducks in France against HPAI brought export bans or economic problems for this Member State. The Commission replied that based on information from France, only five third countries have imposed bans on imports of poultry from France due to HPAI vaccination. In addition, France decided to continue implementing the vaccination in ducks for another year and that may be interpreted that there is no significant negative economic consequence due to this activity.
- EAZA asked if conditions for surveillance of captive birds from zoos following vaccination against HPAI will be changed and reminded the Commission on their letter signalling the current rules make difficult the continuation of breeding and conservation programmes. The Commission confirmed that is aware of the issues brought to its attention and that those will be considered when amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/361.

- **Situation on Sheep pox and Goat Pox and on Peste de petits ruminants.**

The Commission presented an update of the epidemics of Peste des petits ruminants (PPR) and Sheep pox and goat pox (SGP) in the EU. In 2024 PPR was reported for the first time in Greece (11 July) and Romania (20 July). Until 20 November 2024 in Romania there had been 67 outbreaks comprising 226.160 heads (last outbreak early September) mostly in the south-east part of the country while in Greece there had been 86 outbreaks, comprising 31.997. heads (last outbreak early November), mostly in the central part. The epidemic in both MS peaked by the first week of August, followed by a steady decline ever since and mostly likely is reaching its conclusion. Control was possible thanks to the intensive efforts of the affected MS and adoption of exceptional measures like large restricted zones national standstill of small ruminant movements and self-suspension of exports.

Before the summer of 2024 the last SGP epidemic in Greece had been eradicated on March 2024 while the last outbreak in Bulgaria occurred in September 2023. On 21 August SGP was reported again in Greece, to the northeast, close to the border with Türkiye (4 outbreaks in the Evros regional unit) followed by report of one single outbreak in Bulgaria (Yambol region). By 20 November 2024 SGP in Greece further progressed and spread as far as 700 km from the original epicentre (213 outbreaks, 45.122 heads). Spread in Bulgaria has been

much more limited (7 outbreaks, 1.539 heads) with SGP traveling less than 120 km from the initial outbreak. Situation in both MS is still evolving.

- Following questions from the ECVC the Commission clarified that the temporary self-suspension of exports from Greece and Romania, in relation to PPR occurred simultaneously. EU financial support for PPR/SGP control measures is available for direct losses (e.g. compensation of farmers for the value of animals killed etc.) but not for livestock replacement or indirect losses (e.g. due to lockdown). Support for the latter may be available through other EU instruments, controlled by the Commission services other than SANTE. In all cases EU co-financing requires prior payment of the expenses claimed. Regarding vaccination against SGP, it was clarified that this is a possibility that needs to be well considered as a complementary control measure. Its full consequences however, especially in relation to trade with non-EU countries, cannot be accurately estimated at this stage.

- **Information on bluetongue (BTV) and epizootic haemorrhagic disease (EHD).**

The Commission presented the epidemiological situation for both diseases and the EU policy and legal background to prevent their further spread being vaccination the key tool.

- AnimalHealthEurope highlighted the quick development by the industry of specific vaccines for BTV-3 and EHD.
- EAZA is elaborating a document describing the challenges related to the management of BTV and EHD in zoos that will be shared with the Commission.

6. Discussion on vector borne diseases (request from FESASS).

FESASS initiated the discussion with presentations on the experience in the Netherlands about the impact of the BTV-3 epidemic and on vector borne diseases (BTV and EHD). FESASS highlighted that there are different attitudes in infected Member States as regards surveillance, vaccination, movement management or funding, highlighting the need for greater coordination. FESASS also pointed out on the on-going work to develop proposals for a short and a long-term strategy to improve the management of these diseases. The Commission thanked the presentation and will consider the proposals for the strategies.

- UECBV raised the issue of the different BTV conditions that stakeholders need to comply with to move animals to different Member States as competent authorities may have decided to request different BTV conditions under the derogation regime. The Commission replied that the purpose of the derogation regime is to ensure adapting the conditions to the local BTV situation. Also, UECBV pointed out the need to amend the BTV condition whereby animals intended for slaughter in other Member State need to be originated from establishment where there has been no BTV reported cases in the last 30 days. The Commission replied that it is not planning an amendment to legislation in this regard.
- EFFAB highlighted that the detection of a BTV positive bull in semen collection centre blocks the whole centre. It should be possible to treat donors isolated and it should also be possible to perform BTV test in semen for this purpose. The Commission replied that the semen collection centre must be treated as one single epidemiological unit. As regards testing in semen and its validity as risk mitigation measure it implies a significant change in policy and furthermore suitable methods have not been validated in that matrix.
- FVE, Animal health Europe, COPA-COGECA and CEJA expressed the need to continue with this constructive dialogue.

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