

Meeting of the sub-group on poultry

Fourth meeting, 20 June 2022, 15:00-18:00 hrs
(Videoconference)

- MINUTES -

Attendance

Independent expert	Leonardo James Vinco Evangelia N. Sossidou
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Civil society organisations	Eurogroup for animals (EFA)
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Business and professional organisations	AVEC COPA (excused) FVE
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Member States	Czech Republic Denmark Spain Norway
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European Commission	SANTE G5
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Guest(s)	EURCAW-Poultry-SFA (excused) EY Ngaio Beausoleil (expert)
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Topic: Five Domains

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed the participants and guests.

The Commission invited the members of the subgroup to contribute with publications and/or studies and reminded the functions of the Digital Tool, created to exchange information among the members of the group. It encouraged members of the subgroup to upload and share documents for this purpose.

2. Context by the Commission – What is the problem?

DG SANTE put forward the following points in the introductory presentation and in the discussion:

- The problem of having a legislation which is 15-25 years old and based on the five freedoms.
- The alternatives available to address the problem:
 - Baseline scenario: no policy change.
 - Update the legislation partially by adding some aspects of the five domains.
 - Update the legislation using the five domains entirely.
- The main impacts of options envisaged including on stakeholders, and how to mitigate negatives impacts:
 - How to include the five domains in the legislation.
 - How to ensure harmonisation while keeping flexibility.
 - Provide clear wording without room for interpretation.

DG SANTE pointed out the need to evolve from the five freedoms that aim to avoid negative impacts to the five domains that aim to achieve a positive state of animals.

3. Expert Ngaïo Beausoleil presented “The Five Domains”.

Expert Beausoleil presented the “five Domain model”, its history, value, and application in animal welfare law.

The presenter underlined the importance to correctly interpret the meaning of the Domain 5, which cannot be separated from the other four domains. It was explained that it is incorrect to interpret that Domains 1-4 are linked to physiological wellbeing and Domain 5 to psychological wellbeing. The five domains are interlinked, and Domain 5 reflects how physical states and behavioural interactions influence in psychological wellbeing. The absence of negative experiences is no longer considered sufficient for good welfare, which also requires positive experiences.

The Five Domains approach has many advantages:

- Recognises degrees of welfare: welfare is not a binary system, and it is impossible to reach a 100% positive experience.
- Reflects a more detailed understanding of welfare relevant experiences. A lot of normal behaviours reflect negative experiences. However, there are some unpleasant experiences necessary to a certain level to animals to survive (e.g., thirst, hunger, fear).
- Facilitates evaluating and considering positive experiences.
- Allows for a wider applicability: it is a generic model than can be modified for specific purposes.

The five Domain approach provides a flexible but structured and holistic approach, focused on animal’s experiences which facilitates consideration of welfare enhancement. It encourages to look for a wider range of impacts, while at the same time allows to identify and determine the significance of specific problems.

By focusing on animal's experiences, the five domains model encourages the interpretation of physical impacts and highlights the significance of the animal's situation. The model is consistent with public expectations, allows transparent outcomes by forcing a rigorous justification and protects against anthropomorphism and criticism.

The five Domains model can be used to support the animal welfare law as:

- it accounts for latest scientific knowledge,
- is flexible and can account for the evolution of knowledge,
- it emphasizes the affective state orientation of animals (sentience),
- encourages specificity and comprehensiveness,
- is anti-cruelty and justifies the duty to care.

The model would make law better enforceable by:

- providing a structured system for evaluating welfare risks/benefits
- guiding collection and transparent interpretation of evidential data.

4. Eurogroup for animals presents "The Five Domains in relation to policy".

Eurogroup explained that animal welfare science greatly evolved since 1990's and truly acknowledges the importance of emotional state and how animals perceive their lives. The Five Domain model gives more room for positive welfare than five freedoms, and is a dynamic tool, allowing for adding new conditions and consequences if needed.

Eurogroup proposed using the Five Domain model as a framework for the animal welfare legislation and gave some examples on how the five Domains could be integrated in policy.

In that examples, Eurogroup proposed replacing the current general article 3 of the Directive 98/58, which should no longer be centred on "avoiding unnecessary suffering", but should stress the requirement for all farmed animals to be provided with the necessary resources and type of management that enable them to **fully satisfy their species-specific physical and behavioural needs** (domains 1-4) in order to **maximise positive experiences and to promote a positive mental state**, which is the basis for good animal welfare.

Eurogroup also highlighted the importance to have species-specific requirements. As an example, Eurogroup enumerated the needs for laying hens that should be met to achieve positive welfare. Some of these needs included foraging, exploration, experience outdoor environment, good lighting, nesting behaviour, good rearing conditions (e.g., dust bathing, enrichment), genetics, health, or freedom of movement.

Eurogroup showed how the five-domain model could be implemented in the species-specific legislation for poultry. According to Eurogroup, the five domains could be illustrated as follows:

- domain 1 – nutrition: ad libitum feeding of animals to induce satiety, with feed with appropriate nutritional characteristics, at least x g/animal in the litter to stimulate foraging, ad libitum access to water and minimum water flow.
- Domain 2 – physical environment: ban of cages, maximum levels of noxious gases, temperature and humidity rates, space allowances, outdoor access, shelter and lighting.
- Domain 3 – health: use of slower growing breeds for broiler, ban of routine painful procedures unless for health reasons and carried out by a vet under anaesthesia and analgesia, animal health plans.
- Domain 4 – behaviour: being able to escape or isolate, perching, foraging, exploring, dust bathing and nesting, water bath for waterfowl.
- Domain 5 – emotional state: the overall mental experience is the result of conditions under the 4 physical domains, comprising a range of positive and negative experiences.

- General requirement: training programmes and welfare management plans explicitly assess the Domain 5 impacts of common and expected circumstances during farming and demonstrate a good life for poultry.

Summary

- Ensuring that standards meet the five domains model would mark a qualitative step forward in terms of the legal protections of farmed animals.
- Five domains would be the framework. It is more dynamic and gives more room for positive experiences than the five freedoms.
- The positive emotional state of animals is the goal.
- Species-specific requirements and indicators are necessary.

5. Discussion and exchange of views

After the presentations, the following points for discussion emerged:

- The group reflected on how the five domains could be integrated in the legislation and considered that the legislation should require ensuring that animals have **positive experiences** and not only that they do not suffer. The five domains could play a role in achieving this.

The need to have measurable indicators and data easy to collect by farmers and inspectors was raised. Having indicators is important to assess animal welfare and, the five domains could be a useful tool to avoid the risk of collecting only negative indicators, or situations where using resource indicators is not appropriate. However, it was considered that looking at positive experiences often observable only through behaviour indicators, will not make the legislation easy to enforce as data on those indicators is more difficult to collect.

- The group expressed considerations on the **definition of “cage”**, together with “how to ban cages” and, if so, at what part of the production. The definition of cages (in both birds and mammals’ sectors) should be structured on the consideration of all behavioural needs (defined space and height included).

In the case of cages, a combination of resource indicators and behavioural indicators could be appropriate.

- The need to have **minimum requirement standards** was noticed.
- Considerations on “mobile housing” and the fact that its price is rising were mentioned.
- The lack of information of the farming community was highlighted. The benefits that the changes from cage to floor and to the free range would bring to the farming business have to be disseminated in the community. More data are therefore needed to create an economical “prospect” or to give examples to support information.

Behavioural needs of the animals are the most important point on which to lay the foundations for building an information campaign for farmers (**educate, train, and inform the farmer community** is an imperative) depending on the specific needs of the species – mainly for laying hens.

- The subgroup identified **training of farmers** and **informing consumers**, together with **management of the information**, as key points. Many producers could probably need **economical support**, therefore also a **quantification of the investment amount** could be useful.

- **Norway** mentioned that quail production was small-scale or kept as a hobby and that the birds are commonly kept in cages. This is problematic from a welfare point of view because cages need to be very high due to quail's tendency to fly straight upwards. Quails do need to hide, as behavioural need, and shelters have to be foreseen and organized. Egg laying for quails: EUROCC has competencies as a reference centre for training and dissemination, not only for farmers but also for competent authorities and working staff.
- **Economic issues impact** of the phasing out and **how to quantify the welfare issues** should both be considered as key points, to better move on specific issues.

6. Calendar for the next meetings and closing.

- Next EU platform meeting 30th June – 1st July 2022
- Next subgroup meetings:
 - 5th meeting on Monday, 18 July 2022, 14:00-17:00 (online),
 - 6th meeting on Tuesday, 30 August 2022, 09:30-17:00 (Hybrid)

The chair expressed her thanks for the presentations and for the very constructive contributions.
